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MAXINE PHILLIPS on Teen Feminist Magazines

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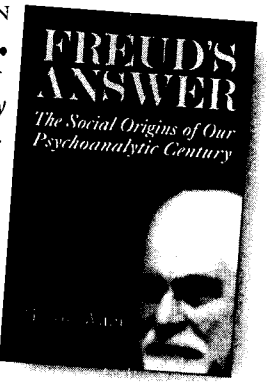
MARTIN WAIN

Freud's Answer

The Social Origins of Our Psychoanalytic Century



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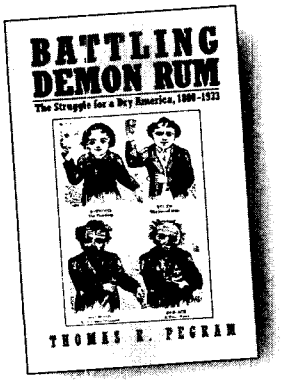

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Editor's Page

It is perhaps a sign of living uneasily in the here and now that we spend so much time looking backward and forward. We find our way in the difficult present by focusing on the past and the future. So, in this issue, Gerda Lerner reflects on the 150th anniversary of the Seneca Falls conference, the founding moment of American feminism, and provides an account of what has been achieved, and what hasn't, in the years since. Anson Rabinbach describes the fights going on among French intellectuals over how to think about the communist past. Sven Birkerts remembers his own adolescence, growing up in the sixties, when everyone's personal life had an immediately available political translation. David Lehman writes about the apolitical stance of the "last" avant-garde—the New York poets of the 1950s and 1960s. ■ We are turned to the future, too, even if, in this post-utopian age, we tend to write skeptically about great-days-to-come. But Seyla Benhabib and Michael Rustin, responding to David Miller's Euro-skepticism, are enthusiastic or, at least, hopeful about the emerging European Union. And Robin Blackburn suggests that there will be opportunities for an ambitious left politics in the years just ahead—but will democratic left parties have the courage to seize them? In a deliberately more modest vein, Jeffrey Isaac describes the international campaign against land mines as a harbinger of politics to come—a "new social movement," specifically focused, nonideological, limited in its goals (which doesn't mean that the goals are easy to attain, only that they are within reach). ■ Why so many of our writers prefer the past and future is evident in Paul Street's strong engagement with the present realities of GOP/Clintonite welfare reform. Finding work for people on welfare is no doubt a good thing to do, or try to do. But, as Street's facts and figures suggest, the effort has to be made by politicians who understand that work is the ultimate welfare benefit, which the market by itself can't be counted on to provide. ■ We have received several critical comments on Steve Fraser's article on union democracy in our last issue, and this will be the focus of the Arguments section in the Winter *Dissent*. Meanwhile, we continue our ongoing series on union politics with David Glenn's analytical account of a rare victory for the labor movement—the defeat of the fast-track trade bill a year ago. For this is a battle that will have to be fought again and again; the terms of globalization are going to be at issue for decades. And though many economists write as if labor can only lose in the long run, the end of the long run is not yet determined.

M.W.

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Dissent

Fall 1998

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A Word to Our Readers

Dissent will soon be entering its forty-sixth year. If we do say so ourselves, it's a remarkable record for an independent magazine of the democratic left.

But in order to keep going, we need your help. *Dissent* is run with rigorous frugality. All of us who work on the magazine and write for it contribute our labor, time, talents, and money. And yet we cannot earn more than (roughly) three-fifths of what it costs to print and distribute *Dissent*. The rest must come—and for almost forty-five years *has* come—from our loyal readers.

We ask for help only every two years, and we ask only for what we absolutely need to keep going . . .well, a little more, to "grow" the magazine. Our goal for 1999 is

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Please lend a hand—if possible, with contributions of three figures (or even four: we believe in progressive self-taxation). You can pay out your pledge in installments over the next two years, or you can make life a little easier for us by sending the full amount now.

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The World Economy in Turmoil

Mark Levinson

WHEN THAILAND devalued its currency in July 1997 it started a world financial crisis that continues to spin out of control. After a year of turbulence, what can we say about the crisis?

Beware of experts. Before the crisis, money managers with supposed expertise in Asia saw free-market liberalization, fiscal balances, strong savings and investment rates, solid growth, low inflation, and, most important to them, very positive rates of return. After the crisis they saw only weak and poorly regulated financial systems, corruption, current account deficits and external debts, excess capacity and looming bankruptcies, bursting real estate and other asset bubbles—in short, a system of crony capitalism. (See a fascinatng paper by Christopher Rude: "The 1997-98 East Asian Financial Crisis: A New York Market-informed View." United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1998.)

The crisis was more severe than many initially claimed or hoped. The amount of capital withdrawn from Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Korea was remarkable. Following a net private inflow of $93 billion in 1996, the net private outflow from these five countries was $12.1 billion in 1997, a swing of $105 billion. That swing was equal to 11 percent of the combined Gross Domestic Products of the countries involved. The financial systems in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, and, to some extent, Malaysia have been shattered and the economies of these countries continue to deteriorate. Unemployment is on the rise everywhere; wages have been slashed by as much as 40 percent; Indonesia's economy (which is in the worst shape) will contract an astounding 20 percent this year; and the number of Indonesians living on less than $360 per year will increase by more than twenty million over the next two years.

The contagion is still spreading. Brazil, Hong Kong, Russia, Japan, Venezuela, and other countries are suffering attacks on their currencies. Even countries that follow "market friendly" policies, like Mexico, have been affected. No government or international institution can control the nervous markets, which, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, are driven by a "psychology that at times borders on panic. . . . Even defenders of free markets are dismayed by the power of currency markets to punish nations beyond the extent of their transgressions."

Will the contagion spread to the United States? It's hard to say. As James Grant remarked, "Like a burglar, recessions arrive unannounced; economists read about them in the newspapers, along with everyone else." However, a recession in the United states—it can't be ruled out—would surely push the global economy into a slump.

Few seem to grasp the meaning of the crisis. If the crisis means anything it is that markets are not always efficient or rational. Few have confronted the implications of organizing a global economy through the market. Quite as if the crisis never occurred, the World Trade Organization is urging more liberalization in Asia, the International Monetary Fund is pushing for liberalization worldwide, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has just released a study titled "Open Markets Matter: The Benefits of Trade and Investment Liberalization." The cheerleaders of the global economy, having suffered an embarrassing defeat, are now picking themselves up, brushing off the dust, and marching merrily on with their heads in the air. But when does a market failure become so exten-

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sive that what has failed are the markets themselves?

Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps the market "worked." Speaking of the crisis in Asia, a New York currency trader quoted in the Rude paper said, "The market is a beast. When you open your economy to the international financial markets, you should know that you are inviting a beast into your house. Once he is in, he will do what he pleases."

We need rules for the global economy. Allowing unregulated flows of financial capital has created a situation in which livelihoods and prosperity are put needlessly at risk. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin speaks grandly of the need for a new financial architecture for the global economy. Whatever we call it—rules, standards, financial architecture—we need some way to tame the beast. Regulating capital flows between nations and linking environmental standards and labor rights to trade and investment are the first steps to ensuring that global economic growth is equitably shared. ●

Mark Levinson is chief economist of UNITE.

David Glenn

Forcing the Questions

Labor's Missed Political Opportunities

A KIND OF euphoria surrounded this summer's UAW picket lines in Flint, Michigan. Nearly everyone who drove past the lines honked a horn or pumped a fist in solidarity; hardly an hour went by without a restaurant van pulling up with a donated meal, and handshakes all around. Drive by a bar, and you'd see a pro-union sign outside ("UAW and Red Wings: You're Number One!"). Walk past a church, and you'd see leaflets for a pro-union rally organized by the Christian Autoworkers Association ("We Already Have the Victory!"). Flint, it seemed, was where all of America's missing class consciousness had gone.

In this atmosphere it was irresistible to make hopeful speculations: What if every strike enjoyed community support this broad and this deep? What if every town devoted this much energy to debating income inequality and workplace democracy?

The Flint of this summer provided a small glimpse of such a world: a functioning republic, with engaged citizens who refuse to bow to the will of the propertied. But only a glimpse. Every so often would come some powerful reminder of the real world of 1998. One evening, for example, a striking die maker from the GM metal-stamping center, gesturing at the TV news crews, solidarity banners, and honking cars said to me: "You know, none of this would be possible if Bob Dole were president."

This point is undeniable. The GM strikes idled nearly two hundred thousand workers and measurably reduced the country's Gross Domestic Product for the summer quarter. A President Dole would have looked at this scene and, invoking his powers under the Taft-Hartley Act, declared an "economic emergency" and forced the strikers back into the plants. Dole would almost certainly have squashed the Teamsters' 1997 UPS strike on similar grounds.

The die maker's point leads us far away, at least for the moment, from lofty speculations about Flint's social movements and their potentially radical energies. Instead, it summons this banal thought: Gee . . . it's a good thing the labor movement poured so much energy into re-electing Bill Clinton. It's not a proposition that makes the heart surge with the fer-

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vor of reform, but it's a true one. With Bob Dole in office, the UAW and the Teamsters would have had much more difficulty in defending their members' contracts—and that in turn would have hampered unions' efforts to organize new members, the lack of which is threatening the labor movement's very survival. So for purely defensive reasons, if no other, it was crucial to secure a second term for the man who finds a new way to disappoint us every week.

In other words, the AFL-CIO had no choice but to play some role in the Democrats' dismal machinery of 1996: the vacuous, glossy television ads; the corporate-sponsored Democratic Convention; the election-season cave-in on welfare reform; the alleged pipeline of funds from a supreme oppressor of labor, the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Although it was nice to see that the electorate preferred the Democrats' (mushy) commitments to education, abortion rights, and the environment to the Republican Contract with America, the entire process did nothing to breathe life into our democracy.

So far the 1998 campaign season has been even more disheartening. There has been almost no talk of labor's core issues—income inequality and freedom of association, much less of any broader liberal reform agenda. Labor is investing heavily in uninspiring, culturally conservative gubernatorial candidates in Illinois and California. And the congressional elections are likely to be smothered by Monica Lewinsky's blue cocktail dress.

Can labor's electoral work carry more hope in 2000 and 2002? Let's take it as a given that for the foreseeable future, unions will need to make a lot of cheerless, defensive, lesser-evil endorsements. But even in this unhappy context, surely unions could use the electoral arena more effectively, as a means of forcing their issues onto the public agenda (as they briefly did with the minimum wage in 1996) and as a means of strengthening coalitions with other progressive social movements. We can look, for example, to the work of Progressive Milwaukee, an initiative of the New Party and the Milwaukee Central Labor Council. This project has brought labor, churches, and progressive neighborhood groups together to elect several candidates in nonpartisan races for city council and school board seats—and used these positions to enact several living-wage laws. In New York this fall, a coalition of unions will try to win ballot status for the Working Families Party, which would use the state's fusion system to cross-endorse labor-friendly Democrats. It's not yet clear, however, whether the Working Families Party has roots in any social movements outside of labor.

Meanwhile, back in Flint: a week after the GM strikes were settled, the state of Michigan held its primary. In the Democratic gubernatorial race, Larry Owen—a don't-rock-the-boat candidate endorsed by the UAW and the state party establishment—was defeated by the cryptopopulist Geoffrey Fieger, who is best known as Jack Kevorkian's attorney. Fieger's bluntness is refreshing, but he's hardly a consistent progressive, and his campaign is accountable to no constituency or social movement. Were Owen's tepid, failed campaign and Fieger's unhinged, successful one really our only options? The GM strikes turned all of Michigan's attention toward fundamental questions about the social contract. The left's failure to force those questions into the state's campaigns was just the latest of our long chain of missed opportunities. ●

DAVID GLENN is associate editor of *Dissent*.

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Michael Walzer

Burying the Czar

THIS PAST summer the bones of Czar Nicholas II and his family, dug out of the basement in Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg in 1918), were solemnly reburied in St. Petersburg according to the rites of the Orthodox Church, with Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian republic and former Communist boss of Sverdlovsk, in attendance: the nearest thing to a state funeral. Watching the television clips, I wondered what was actually being buried here, and decided that it was more likely bolshevism than czarism. But this wasn't the proper burial for either one.

The killing of the czar and his family was a typical Bolshevik act. The Jacobins wanted to kill Louis XVI in the same summary fashion (though they probably wouldn't have included the whole family), but they were prevented by the Gironde, France's Mensheviks, who insisted on a public trial. In Russia, Trotsky favored a trial, mostly, I think, because he imagined himself in the role of prosecuting attorney; he probably didn't have a stronger appreciation of bourgeois justice than Lenin and the other revolutionary leaders.

The Jacobin/Bolshevik argument against a trial was that the ruler of the old regime wasn't a criminal but an "enemy of the people." Moreover, this enemy was as dangerous in captivity as in the field: so long as he was alive, so long as any possible heir was alive, the revolution was in danger. There was, in any case, no point in according him the rights of a citizen: kings and czars are not citizens.

This refusal of the hard revolutionaries in France and Russia to treat the former ruler as a fellow citizen was an ominous sign of things to come. In fact, they weren't ready to treat anyone like a fellow citizen in the democratic sense of that word—as an equal member of the sovereign people, with full rights to participate (and full security while participating) in the making of political decisions. Not even their closest associates. And so the killing of the czar was the first of many summary executions.

When Stalin turned on the Old Bolsheviks, however, he decided on trials—trials so foul (I won't try to describe them here) that no-one who watched them or read about them can hear the words "political justice" without wincing. The great reluctance to bring the Communist tyrants of Eastern Europe to trial after 1989 probably has a great deal to do with that memory. And yet. . .

Suppose the czar had been fairly tried in 1918—publicly charged with specific crimes, defended by attorneys of his own choosing before a jury of his (new) peers. A fantasy, no doubt, but possibly a useful fantasy, so let me continue it. Suppose that a Truth Commission had been set up to investigate the whole repressive apparatus of the old regime, with former prisoners testifying, and also members of the secret police, in public hearings. Suppose that in the end the czar and some of his henchmen (but not all his relatives) had been found guilty and punished, the czar himself executed and buried—a convicted criminal, not a murdered martyr. What might have happened after all that?

First of all, there might never have been a reburial like the one we have just seen. Perhaps, after trials and truth-telling, it would not have been as easy as it was in the 1920s to create a new political apparatus even more brutal than the old one. Perhaps a more decent, a more open and tolerant, politics would have developed. And perhaps President Yeltsin would not be popularly known in Russia today as Czar Boris.

Any new political regime is decisively shaped by the way it deals with the old regime. In Russia there hasn't yet been anything like a full encounter, a public reckoning with communist crimes. I suspect that it will come, in

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the history books and the schools, in the politics of monuments and museums, if not in the courts. For the moment, though, all that the Russians have managed is this funeral. It is not . . . nothing. But I would have preferred that Nicholas's bones had been handed over to some old friends or distant relatives, if there are any, for a more ordinary burial. Though the Orthodox priest in St. Petersburg prayed for all the "innocent victims of the Bolshevik revolution," the dead czar is not the best surrogate for the real victims of bolshevism—not for the Ukrainian peasantry, or the oppressed nations of the Baltic, the Crimea, and central Russia, or the whole of the political opposition, or the Jewish intelligentsia. At least here, in the pages of *Dissent*, these are the ones whom we should remember. ●

MICHAEL WALZER is co-editor of *Dissent*.

Mitchell Cohen

Recuses, Recuses

I FIND THE word "recuse" poignant. It seems weighty, official—perspicacious rather than apologetic. "Excuse me" sounds as if there is something to be pardoned, even if that is not necessarily so. A little like pleading the Fifth Amendment. But if I am asked to perform a task of consequence and I "recuse myself" because there might be a conflict of interest or the appearance of one, then I am an exceedingly responsible citizen.

Judges sometimes recuse themselves to avoid the slightest suspicion of partiality, as viewers of television's myriad court programs know. And jurors are often disqualified if something in their lives might elicit bias in their determinations. "The plaintiff is suing a hospital. Have you any doctors or nurses in your family?"

The idea behind all this is to eliminate prejudices, conscious or subliminal, when it comes to justice. Who could be against that? Consequently, I think that the word "recuse" should loom large in discussions of congressional action against the president, and not (apologies to Jesse Jackson) because it rhymes with other words germane to the scandal—abuse, accuse, confuse.

It should loom large in neon across from Capitol Hill. No insinuations here. It's just that "high crimes and misdemeanors" are serious things. In this era of "values," family and otherwise, any representative who would charge the president and each senator who would judge him ought to be up to moral snuff. I feel that we should have at least as much confidence in them as we have in Republicans who demand investigation of the 1996 Democratic campaign yet oppose campaign finance reform.

After all, destroyers of a presidency should be unimpeachable. Since Judge Starr teaches us that excess in the pursuit of any truth is no vice, and since public servants should surely be held to the same personal standards as the president, our legislators ought to be asked some questions in Joint Session before they proceed against Mr. Clinton. Mr. Starr himself could pose them since he finds the subject matter so compelling:

(1) Have you ever committed adultery or engaged in illicit sexual relations (as most people conceive them)?

(2) Have you ever done so on government or public property?

(3) Would you always answer questions about such behavior truthfully?

(4) Have you ever known of a public official—say, a member of Congress—who engages in such behavior?

(5) If you haven't revealed him or her to the leaders of Congress or to the press, why not?

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(6) Would you please do so now? Follow-up questions on any subject—even on Whitewater!—will be allowed.

The point is not to place members of Congress under legal scrutiny; it's just to be sure that there is no pattern of problematic behavior among those acting against the president. There should, of course, be no penalty for a representative who doesn't want to answer these inquiries and asks to be recused from the proceedings instead. Well, yes, it might be difficult politically to do so, but grin and bare it—you were elected by the people. We must remember: nothing threatens our liberty more than clouded judgments in personal affairs. Fortunately, true Americans rarely make such errors. If you don't believe me, poll your friends.

Still, we Americans, especially our representatives and media, recognize that pressing issues arise when a president has dissembled about his sex life. That's why Mr. Starr's interrogation of our representatives should certainly be carried live on C-Span. And why not improve the ratings with moral commentary by a panel of prominent public philosophers? Johnnie Cochran, Bay Buchanan, Maureen Dowd, Matt Drudge, Arianna Huffington, Larry King, Geraldo Rivera—any combination will do. Then we can get down to business, secure that a cad will not be probed by louts. ●

MITCHELL COHEN is co-editor of *Dissent*.

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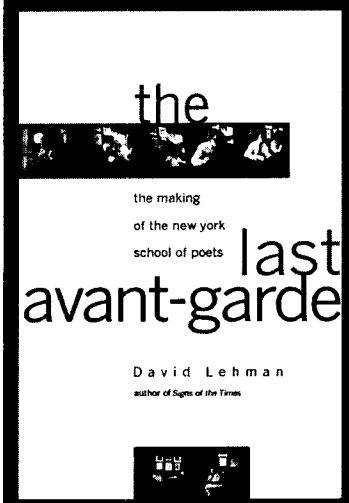

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Small Hopes and Great Travails in Havana

Marc Edelman

FERNANDO RODRÍGUEZ is clean shaven, but he makes a pulling motion under his chin as if he's stroking a long beard.* It's one of the many euphemisms Cubans use for Fidel Castro. "*Este tozudo cumple setenta y dos años el trece de agosto*," he remarks casually. "This obstinate one turns seventy-two on August 13."

"Obstinate" in living so long? In hanging on to power after almost forty years? A sixty-six-year-old father of five from a tumbledown Havana *barrio*, Fernando isn't saying, but he's clearly thinking both things. Like so many Cubans, he's attentive to any sign that the leader may be aging, to any gesture that might betray weakening or augur change.

We are speaking one month after Pope John Paul II's trip to Cuba, and Fidel has just given a seven and one half hour speech that, whatever it may lack in coherence, undeniably demonstrates physical vigor. Before talking informally with dozens of Havana residents from all walks of life, I had expected the pope to be a central topic of conversation. Some results of the visit were already evident—a release of political prisoners, an upcoming high-level meeting with U.S. executives interested in investing in Cuba when the blockade ends. Almost everybody had gone to see the pope, including many nonbelievers. Posters heralding the trip were still visible in a few windows and even atheists recalled the occasion fondly. To my surprise, though, the subject hardly ever arose unless I brought it up. For *habaneros*, the most extended and passionate discussions revolved around survival—their own and that of the regime.

*Names and minor identifying details have been changed.

In 1990, as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) withdrew its aid and then collapsed, Cuba's leaders declared an emergency "special period" that brought unexpected innovations and immense difficulties. Between 1972—when Cuba entered the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the Soviet-bloc common market—and 1985, the country enjoyed annual growth averaging nearly 6 percent. When Soviet subsidies vanished, the economy went into a tailspin. Cuba lost two-thirds of its foreign commerce in 1990–1993, and the terms of trade for the remaining third deteriorated by 40 percent. Gross Domestic Product plummeted by over one-third in the same period, idling factories, farms, and workers, and requiring severe food and energy rationing. Between 1989 and 1993, average per capita calorie consumption dropped 34 percent and protein intake 40 percent. Several young Cubans told me they experienced serious hunger in 1993 and 1994.

Wide-ranging reforms managed to halt the downward slide. In 1992–1994, new laws liberalized foreign investment and small business activity, reformed banking and taxation, and legalized possession of dollars. A structural-adjustment program—recessionary, but with a commitment to minimizing regressive impacts on income distribution—succeeded in reducing the public-sector and balance-of-payments deficits and in stabilizing the market value of the peso. The state decreed the immediate or gradual elimination of subsidies previously accorded most enterprises and established new incentives for especially productive companies and employees. These measures unleashed long-suppressed entrepreneurial energy, brought enormous increases in tourism-related foreign investment, and generated a huge flow of family remittances from Cubans abroad (eight hundred million to one billion dollars in 1996).

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Three-quarters of the land in state farms was turned over to cooperatives and private smallholders and, in 1994, farmers were permitted to sell their crops in markets where prices are determined by supply and demand. Open-air marketplaces now offer everything from rice, sweet potatoes, and plantains to fresh scallions and parsley. The ambience resembles that found elsewhere in Latin America—splendid heaps of produce, vendors' shrill cries, customers commenting on what's for sale.

The food situation also improved as organic gardens sprouted on empty lots throughout Havana, some under government ministries that provide vegetables to their employees, others as profit-making ventures, and still others as initiatives of neighborhood groups that take over and cultivate unused land. With fuel and imported chemicals in short supply, the gardens are organic by necessity. Their sophisticated irrigation and biological pest-control systems, indirect results of the massive investments in agronomic training and research that predate the 1990s crisis, allow them to grow lettuce and other delicate greens even in the summer months and to supply consumers as diverse as housing-project tenants, day-care centers, and tourist hotels.

Economic reforms and the introduction of a legal market economy allowed Cuba to step back from the abyss of 1993, but they also generated new tensions. The U.S. dollar has become Cuba's de facto currency, or at least the only one that easily buys sought-after goods, like bicycle parts or cooking oil. Yet, according to the United Nations, only about one-half of Cubans have regular access to dollars. "The number-one objective of the regime is to save the revolution," explained a long-time European resident of Havana. "And its first method of survival is extracting dollars from wherever it can, just like any other Cuban."

The "second economy" raises serious political problems. How are the diverse interests that have grown up around private-sector activities to be represented in a system built on a centrally planned economy, a single party, and a single criterion of truth? How might social justice, one of the revolution's main claims to legitimacy, be balanced with both market freedoms and the inequalities that the market generates? People with relatives abroad or a family restaurant now enjoy living standards beyond their less fortunate neighbors' wildest dreams.

There aren't a lot of places where Cubans can earn hard currency. Foreign nongovernmental organizations and embassies have to hire local employees from Cubalse, a state agency. Typically, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that needs a secretary or a driver will budget a monthly salary, say U.S.$200, which it pays to the state. Cubalse then pays the employee perhaps U.S.$12 a month in pesos. Many NGOs and embassies dole out extra dollars to employees under the table, a practice called getting paid "on the left." "We pay them on the left," one foreign cooperation functionary snickered to me. "We've become more 'leftist' than ever."

Shortages of basic necessities are fewer than five years ago, but they are still significant. Importantly, their political meaning is different when they are not equally shared, when virtually all Cubans have to resort to the black market, and when pervasive dollar grubbing displaces the cooperative ethic instilled during the almost three decades of relative abundance that preceded the crisis.

Food, Sex, and the Market

"Our cows didn't know the taste of grass," José Acuña laments, trying to explain why his son doesn't have milk to drink. A young, Moscow-educated university professor, he is a dedicated revolutionary. "I liked all that," he says wistfully of the USSR. "The Soviet people, my professors, the way we all shared happiness and difficulties." Now, José concedes, he has to deal with the black market to provide milk for his family.

Cuban cows lived for generations on feed concentrates from the Soviet bloc. Castro had his own cattle farms and devoted personal attention to improving the dairy herd; Cuban agronomists crossed Holsteins with local breeds to create new, phenomenally productive animals. When Soviet feed shipments ceased in 1990, milk output fell nearly 50 percent in just a few years. Similar drop-offs occurred in almost every other type of agricul-

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tural production, with the exception of beans, root crops, and fruits and vegetables, which registered smaller declines. The rationing system entitles each Cuban to six pounds of rice per month (60 percent of pre-1989 average consumption), seven or eight eggs, two pounds of fish, ten to fifteen pounds of root vegetables, and a hundred grams of coffee. Acquiring these subsidized foods requires hours spent reconnoitering state stores to spot deliveries of sought-after items. And some articles in the ration book, notably the eight-ounce per capita monthly allotment of cooking oil, are almost never available and have to be acquired with dollars.

RAMÓN APPROACHES me on the Malecón, the beautiful sea wall that keeps the Caribbean from flooding Havana. He has an unlit cigar clenched in his teeth. "Hey friend, where are you from?" All the hustlers begin this way, and out of boredom I've taken to playing along with them. They ply foreigners with offers of cigars, rum, tours, rooms to rent, meals in private restaurants, girls. "*Tú eres cubano, ¿verdad?*" I reply. "You're Cuban, right?" He nods, thrown off guard. "See, I guessed right," I tell him. "Now let's see if you can guess where I'm from."

"*¿Español? ¿Argentino? ¿Italiano?*" ¿*Chileno?*" Few U.S. travelers come here, and, with an olive complexion and slightly accented Spanish, I don't fit the image many Cubans have of the blond beast from the North. Outside the tourist zones, I usually pass beneath the radar they use to detect foreigners. When I don't, we end up talking, sometimes for hours. Unlike in the United States, the hustlers here don't have substance-abuse problems, nor are they mentally ill. They're friendly, polite, well educated—and desperate.

Ramón is a law student, with a wife and an infant daughter. When I reveal I'm from the States, he presses me with questions about racism. "Here they say your country is the most racist on the planet, but I know that's not true, because there are so many outstanding black athletes and artists." I launch into an explanation of the complexities of racism in the United States and say that there's perhaps some truth in the propaganda. Ramón cuts me off. "Here whites have all the good jobs. Blacks like me don't have a chance. Here there have been too many *engaños*, too many betrayals and lies."

"You know," Ramón continued, "I'm burning my neurons trying to resolve things that ought to be easily resolved." *Resolver*—to resolve—the word is on everybody's lips. Cubans use it to mean "to obtain" or "to succeed." "Did you 'resolve' the detergent?" they ask. "The retreaded '57 Chevy tire?" "The U.S.$140 exit visa?" Ramón is after a bottle of cooking oil worth U.S. $2.40, something almost impossible to acquire in the nearly empty rationing outlets but easily available in the Hard Currency Recuperation Stores now found throughout Havana. To "resolve" the oil, he wanted to sell me cigars, probably a tobacco-worker friend's in-kind wages or perhaps simply lifted from state storehouses.

Ramón asks me bitterly if I've seen "the thirteen-year-old whores who hang out in *discotecas* and smoke marijuana." His indignation is a complicated mix of wounded national pride and threatened masculinity. He's disgusted by what has become of Cuban women, most of whom, he claims, are no longer interested in Cuban men. He uses *puta*, Spanish for "whore," rather than the Cuban slang *jinetera*, derived from *jinete* or "rider." *Jineteros*, who may be of either sex, "ride along" with or hustle foreigners. It's a vague term, including, in addition to prostitutes, the male cigar vendors and unofficial tour guides who try their luck around the hotels and the Malecón. It also extends to Cuban women looking for foreigners to marry.

Late at night I wade through the hordes of *jineteras* in hot pants and halter tops who surround my hotel. Some call out to me, asking if I like them, if I'd buy them a drink. In my room I turn on the television and see Castro in the midst of condemning "medieval chastity belts" and "the old society, where young men would go straight from courting their girlfriends to the bordello." The disparity between the speech and the spectacle outside is so surreal that for a moment I'm convinced that the technicians who pirate satellite television for the tourist spots have mistakenly captured a Miami comedy show fea-

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turing a Fidel look-alike. But I've just tuned in at a particularly pertinent moment during a rebroadcast of Castro's recent seven and one-half hour speech.

Is Castro out of touch? Probably not. Later in the speech he deplores the return of prostitution, though he downplays it in the same breath. Many Cubans believe the government tolerates sex tourism, despite periodic crackdowns, because it's a great source of foreign exchange. However, with prostitution rampant, official rhetoric about social well-being and wholesomeness rings hollow. The incidence of AIDS has been low in comparison with other Latin American countries, mainly because of educational campaigns, widespread testing, and, at times, draconian efforts to cut chains of transmission. But health officials fear that sex tourism could fuel an epidemic, canceling out whatever dollar earnings it generates. Condom use is not widespread, and Cuba does not have access to the 250 million condoms a year needed for the sexually active population.

Stolen Rum in Stolen Glasses

Cecilia Hernández just turned sixty and retired from a high-level aviation job. She speaks several foreign languages, has lived and worked abroad, and is a longtime jazz fanatic. She tells me that her house is in such bad shape that she has to invite me for dinner to her son and daughter-in-law's apartment, a small but airy space crammed with records, books, and magnificent tropical plants. I offer to get beer and rum and we head for one of the dollar-only stands that dot the hotel zone. Cubans can't buy beer now except with dollars, and Cecilia accepts that as a cost of getting the economy back on track. Rum, though, is still available in bars and peso stores. I buy the beer, but Cecilia insists that the rum, at U.S.$5 a bottle, is a "rip-off." She prohibits me from buying it. "*Compañero*," she barks at the clerk, "how is it possible that you demand of me, a Cuban citizen and a revolutionary, five *U.S.* dollars for a bottle of *Cuban* rum? You don't have any rum for sale in pesos?"

The young man at the counter apologized sheepishly. "*Señora*, I'm sorry. You can go to the restaurant around the corner, they might sell rum in pesos. Here we only accept hard currency."

Cecilia counters in an icy tone. "So only foreigners, hustlers, and degenerates can shop here, huh?"

"Please, *compañera*, I'm a revolutionary too, in the Communist Youth, and I don't . . ."

"I don't give a shit about your political militancy! We didn't build this country so that hustlers and scum and . . ."

I grab Cecilia's arm and drag her away from the clerk, who yells that she's an "insolent old bitch." On the sidewalk, Cecilia is flushed and breathing fast. "Damn that son of a whore!" she cries. "You wouldn't believe how bad the stress gets here. Sometimes we just lose control and discharge over nothing. We Cubans are a nation of walking time bombs."

"*Descargas*"—"discharges," "outbursts"—another favorite Cuban word. Cecilia needs a drink more than ever and asks people on the street where to buy rum with pesos. A kid, perhaps ten years old, guides us through the unlit hall and muddy backyard of what once must have been an elegant mansion. "Knock there. Ask for Soledad," he says. Cecilia negotiates a price of twenty pesos, less than a dollar, for a bottle of the best rum, and Soledad calls across the yard to two men in the rear door of a restaurant. Minutes later she dashes over and returns with the pilfered bottle wrapped in newspaper.

At her son's apartment, Cecilia takes out a boom box and puts on a Dave Brubeck CD. Her daughter-in-law brings a tray with the rum, mineral water, ice, and four tumblers. Cecilia remarks on the new glasses and asks Luz where she got them. Luz seems embarrassed and calls to the other room, "Frankie, tell your *mamá* where you got these glasses." Francisco doesn't want to say either. The tension from the street had started to abate with the first sips of rum, but now it's rising again. Finally, Francisco comes clean. He had made a few dollars repairing a neighbor's motorcycle and had gone with a friend for a couple of beers. The waitress brought them the beers but no glasses. Glasses, she said, were for foreigners, there weren't enough for Cubans. "Cubans drink beer from glasses, not from cans," Francisco scowled. He was so offended that on the way out of the bar he slipped four

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glasses into his shoulder bag.

Francisco's confession launches Cecilia on another harangue. "Don't you realize you're not stealing from that business, you're stealing from the state, from the people, from . . . ." Cecilia's tirade collapses in frenzied giggles. "*Coño*," she exclaims, using Cubans' favorite expletive. "Here we are toasting with stolen rum in stolen glasses. Like pirates! What are we coming to in this society?"

Health, Education, and the Dollar

"The 'special period' has been more 'special' for us than for the leaders," Julia Domínguez declared. She's a grandmother and considers herself a revolutionary. One of her sons married an Italian and lives abroad. With his help, she's stockpiling surgical gloves, disposable hypodermics, and antibiotics, in case anyone in her family needs an operation. Two years ago another son had an appendectomy and the hospital lacked the most basic supplies. It was "a disaster and a disgrace." Everything turned out okay, but Julia lives with the fear that next time it might not.

Aída Pérez, a skilled plastic surgeon, works in a hospital for "medical tourists." Affluent Argentines and Brazilians who want a butt-tuck or face-lift come to Havana and pay bargain-basement prices to go under Aída's knife. One of the country's most highly trained and best-paid professionals, Aída earns a monthly salary in pesos equivalent to U.S. $18. Each operation she performs nets the Cuban state several thousand dollars. She reports this matter-of-factly, never saying she feels exploited. Her pride in her training and accomplishments is apparent. She knows, though, that her colleagues elsewhere enjoy living standards astronomically higher than those of Cuban physicians.

The health care system, one of the revolution's greatest achievements, presents striking contrasts. Aspirin and antibiotics are often virtually unobtainable. Hospitals are in such need of supplies and equipment that the number of operations dropped by 31 percent—heart operations by half—in 1990–1995. Yet Cuba also boasts state-of-the-art research laboratories and "medical tourism" clinics. Cuban scientists have developed innovative treatments for Parkinson's and night blindness and invented an impressive range of biotech products, including meningitis B and hepatitis B vaccines, anticholesterol and anticlotting medications, antibodies that prevent rejection of transplanted kidneys, and treatments for vitiligo (loss of skin pigmentation). Health indicators have held steady or improved despite the crisis. In February, for example, Radio Havana reported that the 1997 infant mortality rate was 7.2 per thousand live births—below the U.S. level.

What explains this seemingly paradoxical combination of high-tech achievement, atrocious shortages, and crumbling hospitals, a healthy population and impoverished health care professionals? Even during the "special period" triggered by the USSR's collapse and the tightening of the U.S. embargo, health care has been among the government's top priorities, with expenditures dropping less than 10 percent in 1989–1997. Much of the budget has gone to primary care, particularly the network of neighborhood family doctors, which has managed to relieve pressures on the overextended hospitals. While official commitment to the well-being of the population and concerns about preserving a cornerstone of the regime's legitimacy figure in the continuing allocation of resources to health care, the sector is also an important source of dollars, through biotechnology exports, medical tourism, and the training of foreign medical students.

As Cuba engages the global economy, its educated population is a major comparative advantage. But it is harder to generate dollars from education than from medicine, even if foreign students pay fees. From 1989 to 1996 the education budget fell 46 percent and the number of students in higher education plummeted 54 percent. Young people who earlier might have entered universities now perceive that opportunities lie elsewhere, in the "second economy," tourism, or *jineterismo*. Or, like the black law student Ramón, they are forced to take time off from studying to hustle.

Tenuous Legitimacy and an Uncertain Future

Young people's changed expectations make for a political generation gap that separates them from the middle-aged and elderly revolution-

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aries, who are Castro's core supporters. To appeal to apathetic youth, the regime resurrected the cult of Che Guevara early in the "special period," holding him up as an example of selflessness, sacrifice, and solidarity. Both supporters and critics of the regime, however, appropriated the symbol of the "heroic guerrilla" and infused it with new meanings. "Che wouldn't have liked the dollar to be Cuba's national currency," Cecilia, the hot-tempered jazz fan, observed as she gave me a souvenir three-peso coin bearing the visage of the secular saint in his beret. "I loved Che. But he wouldn't have liked the inequalities we have now."

The disaffected, aware that Castro was always ambivalent about Che's legacy, see the bearded rebel as another victim of the regime. Gustavo Salazar, a muscular army veteran and one of the Malecón cigar salesmen, commented tersely that "Fidel got rid of Che and General Ochoa too." Arnaldo Ochoa, one of the first Cuban officers trained in the Soviet bloc, fought with Venezuelan guerrillas in the 1960s and later commanded Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia. In Angola, the Cuban government gave him carte blanche to traffic in diamonds, ivory, petroleum, and anything else that would raise hard currency. In 1989, days after his conviction for treason and narcotics smuggling, he was executed along with three alleged collaborators, including the director of the government's Convertible Currency Department. Gustavo's view was that the leadership had aided foreign drug cartels because it brought in dollars. Ochoa became a fall guy when intelligence indicated that Washington was about to denounce Cuba's involvement as a transshipment point for Colombian cocaine.

The Ochoa episode remains a turning point not only because it highlighted how the revolution could devour its own, but because it weakened the Interior Ministry, the main internal security agency. Economic austerity and the tourist boom have also lessened the ministry's effectiveness, because it now has fewer resources and has to keep an eye on many more people. Some young people ridicule the security men, easily recognizable, they insist, in the stodgy, prototypically Cuban pleated *guayabera* shirts now worn only by the elderly and die-hard supporters of the regime.

Gustavo's interpretation of Ochoa's execution is borne out by the memoirs of Dariel Alarcón Ramírez, (*Memorias de un soldado cubano: vida y muerte de la revolucíon* [Barcelona: TusQuets, 1997]), one of a handful of survivors of Che's 1967 Bolivian guerrilla campaign. Alarcón was an illiterate teenager when he joined Castro's rebels in 1957, hoping to avenge his wife's murder by Batista's army. After the revolution, he rose through the ranks, serving as Che's bodyguard, an instructor in the "Special Schools" for foreign guerrillas, an "internationalist combatant" in Algeria, the Congo, Bolivia, and Angola, and a colonel in the Interior Ministry in charge of Castro's personal security. Alarcón outlines a process of gradual disenchantment that began in 1967 with Castro's abandonment of Che's guerrillas in Bolivia, which grew as he observed the dollarization of the economy and the autocratic and increasingly corrupt practices of Cuba's top leaders, and culminated in 1996 when he sought political asylum in France. His disillusionment, mixed with continued egalitarian-utopian aspirations, mirrors the attitudes of many Cubans.

HISTORICALLY, the legitimacy of the Cuban revolution stood on five pillars: (1) the tremendous advances in living standards for the majority of the population, especially universal free education and healthcare; (2) the reduction of the grotesque inequalities of prerevolutionary days and the attainment of a modicum of dignity for the masses; (3) the elimination of "vices" of the "old society," particularly prostitution, drugs, and gambling; (4) the singular charisma and wiliness of Fidel Castro, acknowledged even by the "disaffected"; and (5) the confrontation with Washington, in particular the U.S. blockade, and the invocation of the dream of *Cuba libre*. Today each of these fundamentals is in question, as young people forgo university education to hustle tourists, intellectuals sell cherished personal libraries on the sidewalks, and physicians drive taxis. Grandmothers hoard medicines against future calamities, even as they assert admiration for their neighborhood doctors. Prostitution is pervasive, and many suspect that the leadership

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has flirted with international drug cartels. Castro still gives marathon speeches, but his listeners seem most interested in oblique hints of change or possible signs of decrepitude.

LEGITIMACY in any society is constructed or eroded in the countless small interactions of everyday life, in concrete benefits, symbolic displays, and troubling indignities, in the realization of dreams and in their postponement or destruction. In Cuba, this process is playing out amid the tensions between the new inequality and the state's historical commitment to the population's well-being, the frustration of a growing diversity of interests and views in a one-party state, and the conspicuous disparities between rhetoric and lived realities. Many Cubans remark that the regime never figured out how to handle the people's intensely individualistic Caribbean joie de vivre, trying discipline on some occasions while also seeing the island's extraordinarily dynamic musicians and artists as an enormous asset.

The conflict with Washington is probably the one basis of the regime's legitimacy that still has major resonance for Cubans. The blockade—and the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, which imposes additional sanctions and enables U.S. nationals to sue those who "traffic" in expropriated properties in Cuba—provides Castro a ready-made explanation for any difficulty and a justification for authoritarianism. It causes genuine hardships too, particularly in the health care and transport sectors. Most important, it allows Cuban leaders to cloak themselves in the mantle of nineteenth-century heroes such as José Martí and Antonio Maceo, who perished in the struggle for a Cuba independent of *both* Spain *and* the United States.

This deep-rooted nationalist impulse, together with the generalized fear of growing inequalities, fuels Cubans' suspicion of "solutions" that emanate from the exile community. While it is notoriously difficult to gauge public opinion in a society where dissidence has high costs, I found little sympathy on the streets of Havana for the old elite, ensconced for nearly forty years in south Florida and perceived as nostalgic reactionaries, pining away for a world that no longer exists. A few young Cubans confessed to envying their Miami cousins' cars and gold chains. But many more appeared in the grip of an existential dilemma. They loathe Miami's extreme consumerism, violence, and right-wing politics. Although they take pride in Cuba and its achievements, they also long for greater ease in "resolving" life's basic necessities and tolerance for their varied and heterodox opinions. ●

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N.B.: All socioeconomic data in this article are derived from a UN study by the Comisión Económica América Latina y el Caribe entitled *La economía cubana: Reformas estructurales y desempeño en los noventa* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997).

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Nike in Indonesia

Jeff Ballinger

In 1913, when a member of the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations asked him how Pullman porters were supposed to live on $27.50 per month, L.S. Hungerford, Pullman's general manager, replied: "All I can say is that you can get all the men you require to do the work." Eighty-five years later, Nike CEO Phil Knight trotted out the same line to a crowd at the National Press Club, who had come to hear him talk about plans to improve labor conditions at contractors' factories in Indonesia. He cited a report from the field by Jill Ker Conway—the best-selling author, first female president of Smith College, and paid member of Nike's board. Conway, who was seated on the dais with Knight, had reported that she'd observed over three hundred job applicants lined up outside an Indonesian factory that produced Nike sneakers. As it happened, I knew something about Conway's report; I had called her shortly after her return from Asia. She freely admitted that she'd been on a Nike-guided tour, and that she had never before spoken with a factory worker in Asia. The workers, she said, "didn't seem intimidated." She deemed the working conditions exemplary.

Early this summer, in the depths of Indonesia's economic crisis, I visited shoe factories in Tangerang and Serang—industrial boom towns about an hour's drive west of Jakarta. This was not the Nike-guided tour. The workers had many complaints, some of which were the same that I'd heard from their predecessors in the early 1990s, when I was director of the AFL-CIO's Indonesia office: low pay, abusive treatment from supervisors, inadequate breaks, punishing production quotas. And despite the high hopes of this past spring, President Suharto's fall has not brought any serious liberalization. In July, the military publicly threatened to "cripple" the independent labor movement led by Muchtar Pakpahan.

On this visit I also spent time with a group of two dozen workers who had been fired by a Nike contractor in 1992. They had just won a decision from the Indonesian Supreme Court ordering the contractor to put them back to work, with lost wages. The surprise decision—Cicih Sukaesih, one of the group, told me that she had just about given up hope that the court would ever render a verdict—came just after U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin was pummeled by members of the House Banking Committee when he went to ask for supplemental appropriations for the International Monetary Fund. One of the major issues on which he took heat was Indonesia's labor rights, or lack thereof. Indonesia has maintained a "security approach" to labor relations, keeping the military on strike-breaking duty in defiance of a 1994 agreement with then–U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor. With that pledge, Indonesia was able to keep the prized special tariff treatment of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). But since 1994 Indonesia has made a mockery of its promises, pushing striking workers back into factories at bayonet point and jailing independent union activists. (There has been little improvement under the new government of B.J. Habibie; in late July he issued a decree banning political meetings or demonstrations of more than fifty people.)

One important prisoner of conscience is Dita Indah Sari, a charismatic leader in her mid-twenties who interrupted her law-school studies in 1996 to counsel young workers—the vast majority of whom were girls rounded up from rural areas by labor contractors and delivered to factories that can be hundreds of

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kilometers from their villages. The "security approach" to labor relations meant that activists such as Dita Sari had to be painted as dangerous radicals; she was sentenced in early 1997 to five years' imprisonment for "sowing hatred." Her approach, in fact, was roughly analogous to tactics employed by Indonesian environmental groups in the 1980s. These groups—along with the Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation—began to challenge the Suharto regime by organizing grassroots opposition movements.

Since my assignment in Jakarta ended in 1992, I have kept in touch with many brave independent labor activists in Indonesia. For the last several years I have published a modest newsletter called *Nike in Indonesia*, in the hope that collecting and sharing detailed information about a single corporation's operations in a single country will help to reduce that company's "wiggle room" and create enough public pressure to force meaningful change.

Phil Knight and his minions—former ambassador Andrew Young included—insist that Nike is doing a good job of enforcing its Code of Conduct, a sensible-sounding set of rules for contractors making Nike shoes and apparel; Knight adds that "incidents" are bound to happen with a worldwide workforce exceeding five hundred thousand. Both points are largely irrelevant to the predicament Nike faces—it is operating in countries where workers have no protection and cannot organize free trade unions to improve wages and conditions. Nike's contractors, meanwhile, care little about the shoe giant's public relations problems. Nike, they say, uses its size to squeeze the lowest possible price out of them. One trade publication calls Indonesia "a buyer's paradise" because the buyers know all of the costs of production and can use this knowledge to benefit from contractors' price cutting while competing for big orders. (Despite these headaches, contractors can do quite well for themselves. Before the crash, some were reported to be earning over three dollars profit per pair of shoes. This is the kind of margin that makes people sit up and notice; a medium-sized factory can crank out about four hundred thousand pairs per month.) As long as the contractors are determined to maximize their take, no amount of tweaking or prodding on Nike's part is going to address the fundamental problem of an alienated workforce.

I FIRST CAME to Indonesia in the late 1980s, at about the same time Nike contractors began to arrive there. (They were fleeing South Korea and Taiwan in the wake of those countries' successful prodemocracy movements.) The first strike I became aware of at a Nike-producing factory was in 1988; it was sparked by a three-cents-per-day pay cut. The minimum wage then was less than a dollar a day—and 44 percent shy of what the Indonesian government itself said was required to meet the "minimum physical needs" of an adult. Ten years later, just before the Indonesian rupiah crashed, the minimum wage had inched up to what the government designated as the poverty line.

Nike president Thomas Clarke said last year, "You never overpay for things that are good." He was responding to a reporter's question about why the company would pay $200 million for an endorsement deal with the Brazilian national soccer team. Only a month earlier, company spokesperson Jim Small, commenting on a twenty-cents-per-day increase in the Indonesian minimum wage, was quoted as saying, ". . . There's a concern what that does to the market—whether or not Indonesia could be . . . pricing itself out of the market." Filmmaker Michael Moore had information that Nike contractors had been granted exemptions from this modest increase, and he sprang this question on the clueless CEO in time for Knight to send a directive to the Jakarta office. Even then, one disgruntled contractor tried to recoup the five dollars per month by doing away with an "attendance bonus." The enraged workers stormed out of the factory and marched four miles to the local parliament. (The bonus was partially restored.)

Since the Indonesian rupiah began its fall—to between 20 percent and 25 percent of its mid-1997 value—many have argued that Nike could insist that contractors pay workers at least half of the $2.46 a day they had been earning, instead of the current,

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postcrash fifty cents a day. Siti Hartari Tjakra Hardaya, the chair of the prominent contractor P.T. Berca Sportindo, complained to a Jakarta trade publication that Nike had insisted that its payments to contractors must decline by an amount concomitant with the rupiah's drop.

Contractors have been claiming huge losses and issuing predictions of imminent bankruptcies. Richard Read, a reporter for Nike's hometown newspaper, the *Oregonian*, has documented the impact of the twin blows Nike's contractors and workers have suffered during the past year: a reduction of orders because of Nike's inventory glut and the Asian economic crash. The pain has not been evenly distributed: Read notes that Suharto crony Bob Hasan (aka Thee Kian Seng) has barely been touched. Hasan's Astra International is now the fourth largest producer of Nike shoes in the world. When another *Oregonian* reporter asked a Nike official how it felt to be partnered with the number one golfing buddy of Suharto, he replied, "That's just how it works in Indonesia." One contractor with no "connections"—P.T. Garuda Indawa—was totally zeroed-out by Nike's man in Jakarta, Tony Nava.

Workers from Pou Chen told me that their earnings had been seriously eroded by inflation and that it was getting worse every day. Staples like cooking oil had tripled in price. What could account for such a dramatic increase in a locally produced product, I wondered. According to Lily Purba, an activist I have worked with for years, the rupiah's slide made it more profitable to export the cooking oil; the subsequent shortage in local markets drove up the price. Although workers had received a 15 percent increase (eight cents a day) as part of Phil Knight's "National Press Club package," they pointed out that in the last six months inflation was 35 percent. Most observers agree that the figure for this year will top eighty percent.

Worse still is the news that Nike's orders continue to be sluggish, so that only two of the fifteen factories are working overtime; overtime earnings are needed to get above the bare subsistence level. Suriani, an eighteen-year-old who has worked for two years at the Starwin factory, expressed relief that she was able to put in fifty-plus hours of overtime for each of the last several months. She is desperate to send some money to her parents in nearby Cilegon, since the drought has made their farming work a break-even enterprise. Her younger brother, still living at home, recently had to quit school and go to work in the market, carting vegetables. Heti, who also works in the sprawling Pou Chen complex, said she was glad that she chose to live in the workers' dormitories there, because she has heard stories of young women who have been threatened by thuggish landlords for late rent payments. Filial loyalty has clearly driven some of these young women to ignore their own health and well-being while divvying up a pittance with the needy at home.

Knight is adamant about holding the line on wages. In the July issue of *Consumer Reports*, he was quoted as saying, "It's just totally and completely false" to suggest that Nike could afford a pay hike. This has always been the toughest issue for Knight: his contention that "the Market" has set these wage levels, despite the fact that the army fires rubber bullets at striking workers and labor inspectors are bribed to overlook various schemes to cheat workers.

THE CURRENT crisis has put Nike in an unprecedented bind. Increasing desperation on the part of workers slipping further into poverty, while making expensive shoes and apparel for export, may create enough heat to force a meaningful change. Recent events, however, give little reason for hope. Just before Suharto fell, for example, the group Business for Social Responsibility convened a meeting in Jakarta. Representatives from over a dozen of the biggest names in apparel were there: Nike, Eddie Bauer, Levi Strauss, Liz Claiborne, Reebok, and others. Though they had been contacted well in advance, not one agreed to meet a delegation made up of the officially sanctioned trade-union federation and the illegal (at the time) Indonesia Prosperity Workers Union of Muchtar Pakpahan. This unprecedented joint appeal itself was a measure of the desperate situation in which Indonesian workers find

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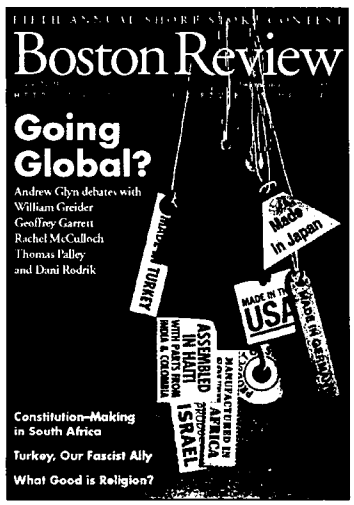
themselves. With the help of Tim Ryan, who runs the AFL-CIO's "Solidarity Center" office in Jakarta, this delegation went to the hotel meeting room where the BSR conference was being conducted, but they were again rebuffed.

The problem, of course, is much wider than just contractors producing for U.S.-based multinationals. The entire setup invites abuse of workers and corrupt practices by officials in developing countries. Much of it is laid out (nearly in blueprint form) in *The East Asian Miracle*, a 1997 report authored by thirty-six World Bank economists. The book hails the "High Performing Asian Economies" (HPAEs) and endorses the suppression of worker rights as a key component of their success. There has been no attempt to suppress this study. It is prominently featured on the World Bank's Web site and is available in paperback for $23.95.

In Chapter 4, the study embraces what it calls the "Labor Trade-Off"—a key feature of which has been the abolition of trade-based labor unions and the creation of company- or enterprise-based unions. This restructuring, in the report's words, has "reduced the marginal benefit and increased the marginal cost of collective action. Thus, in contrast with workers in many other developing countries, workers in the HPAEs are more likely to refrain from work stoppages and other disruptions and from lobbying the government for mandated wage increases. . . employers faced fewer demands from labor." Finally, the World Bank embraces the obvious, stating that the prinicpal benefit of wage suppression is "higher profits" for private firms. Of the two dozen economists from universities and think tanks around the world asked to comment on the study, there was not one dissenting voice on the subject of suppressing labor.

SO THERE we have the core of the reigning orthodoxy for economic growth through global marketization in the developing world: antidemocratic, antilabor regimes suppressing wages to benefit private business and foreign investors. Call it market authoritarianism. It is a system in which people, their political and civil rights denied, are treated as inhabitants of global markets rather than citizens of nations. Former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping pointed the way almost two decades ago when he told the Chinese people in a speech: "Ordinary people need not say too much; they should just keep their heads down and work hard." ●

JEFF BALLINGER is executive director of Press for Change, a consumer information organization that reports on worker rights issues.



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Burgers, Bowling, and the Myth of Americanizing China

Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom

RECENT COVERAGE of Chinese events demonstrates that the American media's strange love-hate relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) is alive and well. Now, as in the past, we see shifts between periods when China is presented as a big bad place that poses a threat to all we hold dear and periods when it is presented as a land of decent people on the verge of converting to our ways and buying our products in record numbers—as soon as they overcome the lingering hold of a few outmoded traditions. There are some novel aspects of the current situation. The idea of an "evil empire" has displaced the "Yellow Peril" and "Red Menace" in the rhetoric of demonizers, for example, and those promoting the Americanization line have a new set of favorite images, which involve describing China as a land where people go bowling, buy stocks, and eat Big Macs. The general pattern remains constant nonetheless, with just one key difference: swings between demonization and romanticization, which used to take place over the course of years, now occur much more quickly.

For example, in the spring of 1997, with the Hong Kong handover looming and books such as *The Coming Conflict with China* making headlines, demonization was in vogue. By October of that same year, however, thanks to the smoothness of the handover and Jiang Zemin's plans to privatize the economy, the Americanization myth was back in fashion. A still-faster turnaround took place on the day U.S. president Bill Clinton reviewed the troops at Tiananmen and then held a televised joint press conference with Jiang. In its lead-up to the first event, the American media trotted out every possible variation on the big bad China theme. By the time the press conference had ended, however, images of Americanization were standard. From that point on, the burgers-and-bowling theme has ruled—at least until mid-July, when this is being written.

Some commentators have, of course, continued to work in brief asides about, say, human-rights problems that remain unsolved. The main thrust of the most recent coverage, though, has been that the PRC is becoming Americanized—not just Westernized, but Americanized. The media continually measure the economic and cultural distance the Chinese have come in recent years in specifically American terms—the number of KFC franchises per city, for example. The political distance China still has to travel is also being measured in a similar fashion: it is common to hear reporters asked about the prospects of democracy taking hold say that the trends are positive, but we should not expect to see national presidential campaigns in China anytime soon.

Clinton claimed, in a Beijing speech, that one reason he made the trip was to help Americans get a "full and balanced picture of modern China." It is true that—thanks in part to the speed with which images of demonization and Americanization have given way to one another—the coverage has *felt* considerably less one-sided of late than is often the case. Unfortunately, juxtaposing contrasting images of a generically despotic and rapidly Americanizing place does not provide a "full and balanced" picture of anything.

One general problem is that we end up hearing very little about things that do not fit easily into either story line. We get occasional (justified) comments from demonizers about women being coerced into having abortions. Those entranced by the Americanization myth sometimes describe an actual female yuppie.

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Nevertheless, we seldom hear any serious discussion of the complex ways that economic reforms have been affecting Chinese women, for better and worse. It is not just that assessments of the positive or negative aspects of the Chinese scene are exaggerated, but that there are too many silences on major issues.

In addition, both the demonization and Americanization myths foster misunderstandings of specific things going on in the PRC. Consider, for example, the damage done by the current burgers-and-bowling fantasy. This imagery obscures the extent to which China is being influenced by many different foreign cultures, not just America's; karaoke bars, to cite just one example, are more numerous than bowling alleys. It also distorts our understanding of Chinese ideals and practices.

This certainly happened in 1989—an earlier time when the Americanization myth was dominant. Captivated by the media's focus on students quoting Tom Paine and rallying around an icon reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty, Americans often failed to realize that many of those who took to the streets were workers angered by official corruption—not the absence of democracy. They also failed to grasp that the student activists themselves were inspired as much by patriotism as by foreign ideals, that they wanted to get the Chinese Revolution back on track, not derail it, to make China strong on its own terms, not Americanize it. Just as the Americanization myth obscured the fact that the "Goddess of Democracy" was a complex symbol with Chinese as well as foreign referents, it obscured the influence of non-American struggles ranging from South Korean student protests to South African hunger strikes and the extent to which nationalistic and democratic desires intertwined at Tiananmen Square.

WHAT PROBLEMS are there with the current image of China as a land of burgers and bowling? One is that there are literally hundreds of millions of Chinese rural dwellers who have never seen the Golden Arches or tried to roll a strike. There are also many migrant workers living in ramshackle urban squatters' camps who would not dream of dining at a nearby McDonald's, since such a splurge would cost them many a days' wages.

The burgers-and-bowling imagery also leads to a distorted understanding of the experiences of even those young Chinese professionals whose life stories the American media find so fascinating. This is because even the most seemingly "global" or "universal" of symbols can end up meaning very different things in different places. One should never assume that buying a stock or watching a Disney cartoon has the same significance in China as in the United States.

This point came home to me with reference to Mickey Mouse, known in China as Mi Laoshu, during my first trip to China in 1986. Watching Disney cartoons on television was a regular once-a-week ritual in Shanghai that year, both for foreigners (starved for any familiar sort of entertainment) and Chinese urbanites of all ages (starved for variety). Everyone in the city knew Mickey's name and what he looked like. This, plus the fact that "laoshu" can mean "rat" as well as "mouse," made it natural that when an official health campaign to eliminate vermin was launched, posters went up that showed Mickey being stabbed through the heart with a stake.

That globalization isn't wiping out all cultural specificity was brought home to me again by a brief conversation I had a year ago, in England, with a young lawyer from Shanghai. He was complaining that he missed the nightlife in his home city and found London's a bit boring, an idea that intrigued me, given my experiences in Shanghai a decade ago, and made me want to find out just what it was he did for fun. Remembering a big billboard for a new bowling alley that I had seen in Shanghai in 1996, I asked him if that was a place he missed. When he scoffed at the idea, I assumed I had offended him by suggesting that a refined, cosmopolitan person would engage in what many Americans still think of as a déclassé sport. His next comment showed how wrong I was: "Bowling," he said, "is for girls."

Many other apparent symbols of "Americanization" can be dissected in similar fashion. Take cell phones and beepers. Some dissidents carry beepers so that sympathizers within the state-security apparatus can warn

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them when a crackdown is planned. Or consider the features of the Shanghai stock market that make it so different from New York's. One of its main functions is to help the government raise money to support state-run industries, and its stocks are divided into two classes, one of which can only be purchased by foreigners. In addition, though it is often cited as symbolic of China's increasing interest in connecting with the outside world, the Shanghai stock market's development has a good deal to do with the rising tide of both nationalism and localism in the PRC. It was allowed to expand before 1997 as part of a general effort by the national regime to ensure that when the handover took place, colonialist Hong Kong would not seem by far the most modern of Chinese cities. Another thing aiding the Shanghai boom is the increasing prominence in the Politburo of political figures with ties to that city. Some of these officials have been delighted to see Shanghai surpass Canton as a trading hub and reassert its status as China's leading metropolis.

No survey of symbols of Americanization would be complete, finally, without a consideration of McDonald's—the corporation whose supposedly homogenizing power has led to the coining of the term "McDonaldization," a dystopian equivalent to McLuhan's rosier imagery of the "global village." Surely it means something that McDonald's has gained a foothold near Tiananmen.

It certainly does, but just *what* it means that McDonald's has arrived in China (and vice versa: in the United States now, *Mulan* dolls are being given away with "Happy Meals" and Sichuan dipping sauce is being offered with McNuggets to provide a "taste of the East") is a very complicated matter. Curious about the Americanization myth, I visited one of the new McDonald's in Beijing during my last trip to China in 1996, and I was struck by an atmosphere quite different from that of a typical American outlet. Just how it was different was hard to tell from a single visit, and I was not interested enough to go back a second time. (An admission: on that trip, the restaurant whose bizarre meaning as a transnational symbol I spent more time pondering was a flashy Beijing eatery called "Auntie Yuan's Chinese Cooking from New York.")

Luckily, there is a wonderful new book that provides a thoughtful analysis of the McDonald's phenomenon. Entitled *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, it is a treasure trove of interesting detail on the diverse ways that Big Macs are consumed and viewed in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Edited by Harvard anthropologist James Watson, it should be required reading for all American journalists about to be sent across the Pacific.

One value of the book is that it highlights the intraregional contrasts that have marked the way McDonald's has become part of the culinary, economic, and social landscape of different East Asian cities. In doing so, it demonstrates just how misguided it is to speak generically of "Asian values," "Asian traditions"—indeed "Asian" anything.

The excellent chapter on Beijing by UCLA ethnographer Yunxiang Yan also shows just how often decidedly non-American meanings and practices have become associated with McDonald's in the PRC. We learn from Yan that Big Macs are viewed as part of a "stylish foreign cuisine" in Beijing, yet classified as bread snacks that happen to contain a bit of meat, as opposed to meat-based main courses. We also learn that Beijing McDonald's restaurants are often seen by young couples as romantic dining spots, and that families sometimes go there to mark special occasions in a relatively formal setting, as opposed to ducking in for casual getaways when too tired to cook, as in the United States. Yan describes the development of novel customs such as the employment of personal greeters—nicknamed "Aunt McDonald"—who establish long-term relationships with young customers. He shows as well how the large number of one-child families affects everything from marketing to the handling of in-store birthday parties.

Essays such as Yan's move us closer to getting a "full and balanced" picture of China than do a score of magazine articles that speak in a very general way about how Chinese lifestyles are changing. It is based on close observation of the creative process by which real people react to new products and prac-

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tices and put localized spins on transnational phenomena. Yan asks questions about eating at McDonald's that could be (but all too rarely are) posed about other activities, from protesting to using the World Wide Web. How do Chinese of different generations treat Big Macs, he asks, and do men and women view imported fast food differently? Does income level matter? What is the impact on familial customs, as well as diet, of a new type of restaurant?

To be fair to the American media, there is a handful of very good China cor-respondents who like to ask and answer these sorts of questions, and occasionally pieces that do this make it into print or onto the air. All too often, however, such pieces are axed or their impact is minimized by a flood of other sorts of reports that ask only "how bad is China?" or "how soon will the Chinese become like us?"

In the end, thanks to their failure to make room for complexity, the demonization and Americanization myths, which seem to be opposites, turn out to have much in common. This is deeply troubling, especially because misleading imagery can and does affect government policies as well as the popular imagination. The Chinese deserve better. And a changing China—where burgers are for lovers, democracy is for nationalists, beepers are for dissidents, Mickey is a rat, and bowling is for girls—is just too interesting a place to be viewed as a mirror-image-in-the-making or the worst nightmare of a foreign land. ●

Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom is the author of *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford University Press, 1991) and is working on a book on *Human Rights and Revolutions* co-edited with Lynn Hunt and Marilyn Young.

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Writing Iraqi History

Yitzhak Nakash

ONE DAY, God decided that Saddam Hussein had caused enough harm and misery on Earth, and that it was time for Saddam to face the Creator. So God summoned Azrael, the angel of death, and told him to go down to Earth and take up Saddam's soul. Azrael went to look for Saddam. The Iraqi president was in his palace, and Azrael went there without delay, trying to get in through the main gate. But the guards caught Azrael and threw him into prison. After three months of severe torture, a guard came and told Azrael that he was "clean" and free to go. Upon his return, God asked Azrael: "Where the hell have you been all this time?" "God," said Azrael, "you don't know what I have been through. Saddam's guards caught me and tortured me really badly—I almost died down there." On hearing this, God turned pale and beseeched Azrael: "I hope you didn't tell them that I sent you?"

This joke is said to be widespread these days in the streets and coffee shops of Baghdad. It tells us something about the current frame of mind of Iraqis, and underscores the fact that the "Republic of Fear" built by the Ba'th Party since its coming to power in 1968 is still firmly in place.

Seven years after the Gulf War, suffering and despair have forced Iraqis to fall back on their primordial identities: the family, the clan, the sect, the region. In particular, there has been a resurgence of tribal affinities and institutions in a country where most people are descendants of nomadic Arab tribes. Tribal heritage is something that a majority of the country's Arab population shares, and the government has therefore encouraged a revival of tribalism during and since the war to foster national cohesion among its people.

The resort to tribalism, then, does not mean that Iraq is in any danger of disintegrating. Unlike the Kurds (who constitute a distinct ethnic group with its own nationalist aspirations), Iraq's other two major groups, Arab Sunnis and Shi'is, are meshed together, and each retains a strong interest in protecting the country's integrity. For the Sunni Takriti clan, whose members rule Iraq today, Iraq's integrity is a question of survival. They know that fragmentation would end their political hegemony and prosperity, leaving them, and the Arab Sunni minority that accounts for 20 percent of the population, in control of a small territory in central Iraq with access neither to the sea nor to oil. For the Shi'i majority of some 55 percent, the question is rather one of gains and losses. Were Iraq to splinter, the Shi'is in the south would lose the capital Baghdad (where Shi'is are more than half of the population) and the shrine cities of Kazimain and Samarra, situated in central Iraq, as well as substantial revenues from the oil wells in the Kurdish north. Moreover, if confined within a state smaller than the present Iraq, the Shi'is would not be able to realize their dream of attaining power in a state that has been dominated by a Sunni elite since the formation of modern Iraq by the British in 1921. Thus, even on those occasions during and after the Gulf War, when there was talk in the U.S. about the advantages and disadvantages of dismembering Iraq, Arab Sunnis and Shi'is did not really contemplate going their separate ways.

STILL, the absence of plans for divorce does not imply a happy marriage. In order to maintain its monopoly on power in Iraq, the Sunni ruling minority has had to keep the Shi'i majority in check. One way to justify this has been to portray the Sunnis as better Arab nationalists than the Shi'is, while

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presenting Shi'i grievances and protests against discrimination as acts of disloyalty that promote sectarian divisions. For almost seventy years, therefore, successive Sunni governments in Iraq have questioned the Arab origin of the Shi'is as well as their loyalty to the Iraqi state. Iraq's rulers have presented Shi'ism as a subversive heresy motivated primarily by Persian hatred for the Arabs, and they have stressed the Persian threat to Iraq posed by neighboring Iran. The association of Iraqi Shi'ism with Persian culture and Iranian history has been a recurring theme in textbooks and government propaganda in modern Iraq. Thus, in the wake of the 1991 Shi'i uprising against Saddam Hussein, Ba'th government officials mounted a massive campaign in the media against the Shi'i marsh Arabs, portraying them as "un-Iraqi" and describing their culture as "primitive and debased." This type of propaganda, which suggests that the Iraqi Shi'is have an indelible "Persian connection," is intended to dispute the Arab credentials of the Shi'i majority and to place the Shi'is on the defensive.

There were occasions in this century, of course, when Iraqi governments found it expedient to reward the Shi'is so as to reduce sectarian tension and rally Shi'i support. This clearly manifested itself during and immediately after the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–1988 when Iraqi Shi'is, who formed the majority of the infantry's rank and file, fought their Iranian coreligionists, demonstrating that their loyalty to the state overrode their sectarian allegiance and their discontent against the Sunni Ba'th government.

Nevertheless, Iraq's rulers were determined to keep power in Sunni hands, and they therefore ignored Shi'i claims that they were "the indigenous sons of the country" and that their tribal origin was proof of their Iraqi and Arab identity. Under the Ba'th, Sunni political hegemony was bolstered further. As part of a strategy for survival, the Party promoted a nationalist ideology intended to project it as the bearer of Pan-Arabism. Shi'i preference of Iraqi to Pan-Arab nationalism was taken as evidence that the Shi'is did not share the commitment of the government to the ultimate goal of an Arab state extending beyond the borders of Iraq.

Because the Ba'th has always sought to control the definition of Iraqi and Arab nationalism, it has been sensitive to any suggestion that the Iraqi Shi'is were first and foremost Arabs. This sensitivity has not extended to academic studies published in Western languages. But what if such a work were to appear in Arabic?

My interest in writing on Iraq has a good deal to do with my Iraqi Jewish background. Although I was born in Israel and spent most of my life there, I have always been curious about the birthplace of my parents and ancestors, members of a community that had lived in Iraq for two-and-a-half millennia from 586 B.C.E., after Nebuchadnezzar occupied Judea and razed Jerusalem, to 1949–1951, when most Jews left for the state of Israel. It was through writing that I sought to explore Iraq—a land to which for obvious political reasons I could not travel. My decision to focus on the Shi'is grew out of the Iran-Iraq War, when, like other observers, I was puzzled by the fierce fighting between the Iraqi Shi'is and their Iranian coreligionists.

The Shi'is of Iraq was first published in April 1994 by Princeton University Press. The book is now in its fourth printing with sales around four thousand copies—a good figure for an academic book on the Middle East. The book was well received in academic circles in the United States and in Europe, and the paperback has been adopted in courses taught by historians and social scientists. Curiously, the book has so far escaped the normal fate of Western studies that engage the realities of ethnic or sectarian politics in the Middle East: it has not been denounced as Orientalist.

The book advances two major theses. First, contrary to the view that Shi'is constituted a majority in Iraq from early Islamic times, the book shows that by and large the Iraqi Shi'is are recent converts to Shi'ism; their conversion took place mainly during the nineteenth century as the bulk of Iraq's Arab nomadic tribes settled down and took up agriculture. Both those tribesmen who converted to Shi'ism and those who remained Sunni largely because they kept to the desert way of life still share

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Arab social codes and cultural attributes. This suggests that behind the power struggles between Shi'is and Sunnis in modern Iraq there exist two sectarian groups that are in fact quite similar. The tension fueling the sectarian problem in Iraq is thus primarily political rather than ethnic or cultural. The second major thesis of the book is that Iraqi Shi'ism is radically different from its Iranian counterpart, not in its formal doctrine, but in its sociocultural attributes as well as in the way it has interacted with politics and the economy. These differences between Iraqi and Iranian Shi'ism help explain why eighteen years after the Iranian Islamic revolution, the large majority of Iraqi Shi'is have not been swayed by it.

Although I did not intend it this way, the book has a bearing on the sensitive issues that Sunnis and Shi'is have been debating since the establishment of modern Iraq: who is an Iraqi, and who represents the true spirit of Arabism in Iraq? The similarities between the two groups undermine the claim of the Sunni ruling minority to be "more Arab" than the Shi'is, and hence call into question their right to rule and to define the meaning of Arab and Iraqi nationalism. At the same time, the strongly Arab character of Iraqi Shi'ism reinforces the assertion of Shi'is that they are no less nationalistic than the Sunnis, giving credence to their call for a redistribution of power that would end Sunni minority rule in Iraq. Yet, as long as the book was available only in English, its findings had little relevance to the debate between the Sunni Ba'th government and the Shi'is.

In September 1994 I received a phone call from an Iraqi who said he was on the editorial board of a publishing house in Damascus—Dar al-Mada, which is closely associated with the Iraqi Communist Party. The Party is outlawed in Iraq today and operates mainly from Syria. The caller went straight to the point: Dar al-Mada would like to translate my book into Arabic, and, he asked, "would you be willing to consider the idea of writing an introduction for the Arabic edition?" This phone call led to further dealings with the director of the Arabic press. The upshot was that the Syrian publisher asked for and received formal permission to publish the translation from Princeton University Press (a move almost as unusual in the Arab world as it would be in China); meanwhile, I got full control over the text and wrote a special introduction for this legal Arabic edition.

The motives of Iraqi communists in undertaking the translation are not that difficult to divine. At its peak in the 1950s, before the emergence of the Ba'th, the Communist Party was the most powerful in Iraq, Shi'is forming the majority of its constituency. After coming to power, the Ba'th depicted the Iraqi communists as a Trojan horse, pointing to contacts between the Iraqi Communist Party and its Iranian counterpart as evidence that Iraqi communists were not true Arabs. Iraqi communists therefore had a stake in pursuing the translation of a book that shows the Arab origin of the Shi'is.

It is more difficult to figure out why the Syrian government would allow a translation of the work of an Israeli. I suspect that factors other than the scholarly value of the book, the relative literary freedom in Syria in the mid-1990s, and the desire of Dar al-Mada to make some profit were at play. From the Syrian point of view, the publication of a book dealing with the main (Twelver) branch of Shi'i Islam enables the 'Alawi ruling minority to reaffirm that the 'Alawis (a heterodox group whom both Sunnis and Shi'is have usually considered beyond the pale) are part of mainstream Shi'i Islam, and that their deviant religious beliefs in no way impinge their credentials as Arabs. The green light given for the translation may also have reflected the willingness of the Syrian Ba'th to tease its Iraqi counterpart and irritate the Sunni Takriti minority that rules Iraq. The timing of the initiative is also interesting: when the Syrian publisher approached me in late 1994, the Syrian and Israeli ambassadors to the United States were meeting at a site near Washington, D.C.

In January 1996 the Arabic translation duly appeared in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, and soon after in Jordan, as well as in Europe, where large communities of Iraqis live. A second printing followed in June, bringing the number of legally printed copies to six thousand. I have no concrete information as to who

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bought the book, but chances are that most purchasers were Iraqi Shi'is in exile. A pirated edition has also appeared, printed most likely in Beirut late in 1996; obviously, I have no information regarding the print run of this edition. Nevertheless, it is already clear that the book has sold many more copies in Arabic than in English, and to a much more diverse audience, extending beyond academic readership.

Although for a few weeks during the summer of 1996 the book was listed as a best-seller in some of the London-based Arabic newspapers, only two reviews appeared then, and those were quite short and insignificant. I did receive some touching personal letters and appreciative phone calls from Iraqis who liked the book, but these struck me at the time as nothing more than the isolated reactions of a few individuals.

Then, word came that the translator, 'Abd al-Ilah al-Nu'aymi, had been beaten up in Prague by some Iraqi sympathizers of Saddam Hussein on account of his translation of the book. To those Iraqis, 'Abd al-Ilah was a traitor and a collaborator. 'Abd al-Ilah, whom I had met in London prior to that incident, is a very gentle man, incapable of hurting a fly, let alone a human being. He comes from an Iraqi Sunni background and in his youth was active in the rank and file of the Iraqi Communist Party. I was relieved to hear recently that the British Home Office was considering 'Abd al-Ilah's application for asylum in Britain on political and humanitarian grounds.

THE ASSAULT on 'Abd al-Ilah made me realize that Iraqis were not as indifferent toward the book as I had thought. More Iraqis started relating positively to it, while others have clearly been agitated by it. The stir that the book created was evident in the reviews that appeared in London-based Arabic newspapers in the first half of 1997. These reviews, and the numerous encounters that I have had during the last year with Iraqis of various backgrounds, both in the United States and in England, testify to the way that Iraqis in exile have confronted not only the book and its author, but also their own history and predicament.

Iraqis were preoccupied with my personal background and my motives (or secret agenda) for writing the book. There has been a good deal of debate surrounding my discussion of the sectarian problem in Iraq. Both those who related positively to the book and those who rejected it outright have shared three basic concerns: How valid and useful are the book's major conclusions for explaining modern Iraqi society and politics? How authoritative is the author's portrayal of the distinct nature of Shi'i Islam in Iraq? And how relevant is the history of Iraq as presented in the book to the problems and dilemmas that Iraqis in exile face today?

In late February 1997 a lengthy review appeared in *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, the editor of which is a Palestinian who has taken a pro-Saddam stand both during and since the Gulf War. The review was a furious attack on the book by 'Ala' al-Lami, an Iraqi whose name reveals his descent from the Bani Lam Shi'i tribe. Lami is a hard-core Maoist who lives in Geneva and sometimes works for Barzan al-Takriti—Saddam's half-brother and Iraq's ambassador to Switzerland. "*The Shi'is of Iraq*," Lami declared, "is the most comprehensive work of fabrication of modern Iraqi history, written in order to ruin Iraq's future. Although Nakash is neither a Sunni nor a Shi'i, his analysis nevertheless is charged with a spirit of sectarian hatred, very much like his friends in the Iraqi opposition in exile." A series of letters to the editor followed Lami's review. My Israeli and Iraqi-Jewish origin, and the fact that I also have U.S. citizenship, became a topic of discussion. These attributes were taken as proof that the book was a Zionist conspiracy in the service of Western imperialism.[1]

The timing of all this is telling. By 1997 Iraqis in exile had come to terms with the fact that Saddam was stronger than at any time after the Gulf War. The first clear sign pointing to this was his successful excursion into the Kurdish north in August 1996. In one simple stroke he managed to destroy the infrastructure of an entire CIA operation intended to undermine his rule. Saddam was there to stay, and Iraqis of various political inclinations began angling themselves toward the regime in Baghdad. In November 1997 Iraqis were again reminded of Saddam's resource-

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fulness. This time the Iraqi leader cornered the Clinton administration, forcing the United States to rely on a Russian-negotiated face-saving solution (allowing the return to Iraq of UN weapons inspectors) so as to avert a serious confrontation.

The canny behavior of Saddam, and his remarkable sense of survival, have had a very sobering effect on Iraqis. The barrier of fear, which cracked a bit following the Gulf War and the Shi'i and Kurdish insurrections of 1991, is as high as ever today, and remains unbroken even among those who live in exile. Likewise, the image of an invincible Saddam still looms on the horizon, affecting power relations between Iraqis everywhere and the regime in Baghdad. The following story, from which I have stripped a few identifying details, demonstrates this:

While on a visit to England early in 1997, I had dinner with some Iraqi Shi'i Islamists. One of the men to whom I was introduced shook my hand and said: "You know, I owe you an apology." "Why?" I asked. "Perhaps you remember that some time ago your book was reviewed in one of the Arabic newspapers here in London." "Yes," I said, "I remember that review." "Well, I have to tell you: I am the one who wrote that review. Unfortunately, I could not write a positive one because if I had written a good review, people here and the government at home would have accused me of promoting sectarianism in Iraq."

Saddam's reassertion of power coincided with the collapse of the Oslo agreement and the subsequent deterioration in Arab-Israeli relations. Opponents of the peace process who kept out of sight until 1997 now had the opportunity to come into the open and vilify the book and its author. Metaphors and vocabulary that were part of the language of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the period before Oslo were easily invoked once again: the Israeli who has no place in our midst, the outsider who has no right to study our history, the Jewish-Zionist and imperialist infiltration of Arab culture and Muslim civilization.

Reality, however, is not as grim as this account might suggest. Far from it. The picture as a whole is very complex, revealing what lay behind the facade of Arab politics and what was on the mind of Iraqis in exile across the entire sociopolitical spectrum.

Inside the Iraqi Communist Party some new winds were blowing. Its leaders and intellectuals were torn between ideological and practical considerations; they were searching for direction in the period immediately after the Gulf War, when there was much talk about "a new world order" dominated by the United States as the only superpower. If I needed any confirmation that Iraqi communists were facing a major ideological crisis, it came in the form of an open letter addressed to the leadership of the Party by Hadi al-'Alawi, an Iraqi Shi'i communist turned Maoist, based in Damascus. 'Alawi's letter was published in *Tariq al-Sha'b*, one of the organs of the Iraqi Communist Party; its appearance in January 1996 coincided with the release of the Arabic translation of *The Shi'is of Iraq*. Warning against an alarming development within the Party, 'Alawi wrote:

> The intellectuals in charge of our publications began omitting the term "imperialist" from the Party's literature, replacing it with terms like "the new world order" and the "international community." They strive to reshape the worldview of our masses, while seeking help from the imperialists. These intellectuals have given up on their core nationalist principles, and have begun writing our modern history in a tone similar to the discourse used by the British and the Americans. Indeed, Dar al-Mada is now printing a book on the Shi'is of Iraq, which portrays the history of modern Iraq as a history of conflicts between Shi'is and Sunnis, not the history of the struggle [of Iraqis] against British imperialism.[2]

'Alawi's letter reveals the acute dilemma of Iraqi communists in the post-Soviet era: should they stick to their old guns or should they try to transform themselves and forge new contacts with the West? The meetings that I had with Iraqi communists during 1997, and a review of *The Shi'is of Iraq* in *al-Hayat* by an Iraqi communist who challenged 'Alawi's line of thought, further alluded to that dilemma.[3]

Within Shi'i religious circles, my book seems to have touched a different nerve. The

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enthusiasm that some observant Shi'is have expressed toward the book, and the ambivalence and reservation of others, echoed an old debate between reformers and conservatives within Shi'i Islam. In my book, I discussed aspects of this debate as manifested in the struggle among Shi'is in Najaf during the 1930s over the future of the Shi'i college institution (madrasa) in the period following the establishment of nation-states in the Middle East. While the reformers sought to detach Shi'i education from the influence of the past, and reshape it in conformity with modern times, the conservatives insisted on preserving the curricula and teaching methods as they existed in the time of their predecessors. As the twentieth century draws to an end, a similar debate is under way among observant Shi'is. Its content, however, has larger ramifications for Shi'is than the debate of the 1930s because of the growing dilemmas and pressing needs of a younger generation of Iraqi Shi'is, who constitute a majority among the four million Iraqis living in exile.

Today, the debate centers around the question of what Shi'ism should be in the twenty-first century: should it be a set of fixed religious values, unaffected by time, which cut across national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries or should it evolve into a flexible identity shaped by the particular circumstances and the environment in which Shi'is live? The suggestion in my book that Shi'ism in Iraq and Iran are different in character has been picked up by participants in the current debate among observant Shi'is—something that I had not anticipated or intended at the time of writing the book.

Like their parents and grandparents earlier in this century, the younger generation of Iraqi Shi'is continues to search for its identity. A very perceptive Iraqi Shi'i journalist explained to me what was on the mind of young Iraqis, both ordinary people and activists of various political inclinations: "On the one hand, we have the staunch secularists among us—mainly communists and Ba'thists—who deny that there is a sectarian problem or that there is such a thing as a Shi'i identity, stressing that we are all Arabs; on the other, our ulama tell us that Iraq is the cradle of Shi'ism, that Shi'i Islam is universal, and that our Shi'ism dates back to the time of the Prophet. Your book is immensely important for people like me. The idea that many of us are recent converts to Shi'i Islam, and that Iraqi and Iranian Shi'ism are different in nature, fills a huge gap between those two extreme positions. It throws a new light on our past, and it enables us to approach our history as well as our Iraqi Shi'i origin and identity from an entirely different angle."

Nobody knows what the future will bring to Iraqis. The February 1998 standoff between Baghdad and Washington underscored the isolation of the United States—even among its own closest allies—due in part to the administration's lack of a coherent policy toward Iraq. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan clinched a deal with Saddam Hussein at the eleventh hour, averting a war between the United States and Iraq, much to the relief of the administration. In this crisis, Saddam Hussein clearly had the initiative. He succeeded in driving a wedge between the United States and Russia, while acting with determination to get a timetable from the UN to end its weapons inspections, which, ultimately, would lead to the lifting of sanctions against Iraq. Saddam lost the Gulf War, but he seems thus far to have won "the mother of all battles," securing his own survival and that of his Ba'th regime.

A year or even five, ten years from now, the temple of horror erected by the Ba'th might still stand intact. Saddam Hussein might be there too, continuing to defy the wish expressed by the United States since the Gulf War that a "nice" Sunni general would finally manage to topple the Iraqi president. It will be a long time before ordinary Iraqis are able to recover from their ordeal and try to take matters into their own hands, as they did in 1991 when they rebelled against Saddam following the encouragement of the Bush administration. Journalists visiting Iraq report that the Iraqi middle class has reached a state of destitution, and very little is heard of the lower classes, whose members must be in worse condition. Iraqis have come very close to hitting the bottom; they just try to make it, to find

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enough food to feed themselves and their children. For some time to come, their fighting will not be against Saddam, but for their own survival. Those who are lucky enough to be outside the country have to cope with a different set of worries, having started new lives in unfamiliar environments that have not always been welcoming.

THE IRAQIS I met dream about a new Iraq where people can openly express an opinion, and discuss Iraqi society and politics, without fearing for their lives. I met these people as they tried to sort through their past while continuing to hope for a better future. Their reactions to my book, and to me, have turned the act of writing *The Shi'is of Iraq* from a purely scholarly endeavor into a meaningful personal experience.

As I reflect on that experience, it strikes me as a unique opportunity that allowed author and audience to affirm one another. This exchange has done much to compensate for the lack of an Iraqi academic reception of the book—an inconceivable idea in the Middle East as it currently is. The exchange was often very informal. I communicated with Iraqi Shi'is using Iraqi Jewish dialect, something that would have been out of the question in the old days when Jews in Iraq made a point of using a Muslim dialect in their dealings outside the community. What touched me in that experience is the fact that my book gave Iraqi Shi'is an opportunity to look in a mirror, and in the process also to acknowledge me and to admit my existence.

The Shi'is of Iraq attempted to bring to life a political community marked by its own distinct identity—people who are not necessarily the precursors of a radical Islamic state that would align itself with Iran. Yet as we approach the eighth anniversary of the Gulf War, there is still a tendency in the West (and among some of Iraq's Arab neighbors) to view the Iraqi Shi'is as part of the larger Shi'a population in Iran. To this day, there has not been any genuine willingness on the part of the U.S. and its allies to review long-established policy assumptions regarding the nature of government in Iraq and the existing reality of Sunni minority rule. Meanwhile, a dictatorial regime in Baghdad has managed to regain much of its prewar coercive domestic power, thriving on the deterioration of Arab-Israeli relations and the paralysis of U.S. policy in the Middle East. ●

POSTSCRIPT: As this article went to press in August, Saddam Hussein's government broke off all cooperation with UN weapons inspectors. The Security Council responded with a mild condemnation, while the U.S. response thus far in this crisis has been strangely muffled. It remains to be seen whether the Clinton administration will live up to its promise to stand firm on Iraq.

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1. For Lami's review and the subsequent correspondence in *al-Quds al-'Arabi* see: 'Ala' al-Lami, "A Suspicious Reading of the Sectarian Composition of Iraqi Society," 26, 27, and 28 February, 1997; Salim al-Wasiti, "The Place of Conspiracy Theory in Iraqi Culture," 15-16 March, 1997; 'Abd al-Karim Sabir, "Ishaq Naqqash and Imam (Mahdi) al-Khalisi," 28 March, 1997; 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad Mujahid, "Imam al-Khalisi and his Nationalist School of Thought," 25 April, 1997. (Arabic titles translated.)

2. Hadi al-'Alawi, "A Dialogue between Mr. Hadi al-'Alawi and the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party," *Tariq al-Sha'b*, no. 6 (January 1996), p. 10.

3. For the Hayat review see Falih 'Abd al-Jabbar, "The Shi'is of Iraq as Portrayed in Ishaq Naqqash's book," *al-Hayat*, 9 June, 1997, p. 19.

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The Meaning of Seneca Falls: 1848–1998

Gerda Lerner

In 1848, acccording to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "a specter [was] haunting Europe—the specter of communism." In that same year, the upstate New York village of Seneca Falls hosted a gathering of fewer than three hundred people, earnestly debating a Declaration of Sentiments to be spread by newsprint and oratory. The Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention marked the beginning of the woman's rights movement.

The specter that haunted Europe developed into a mighty movement, embracing the globe, causing revolutions, wars, tyrannies and counterrevolutions. Having gained state power in Russia, China and Eastern Europe, twentieth-century communism, in 1948, seemed more threatening a specter than ever before. Yet, after a bitter period of "cold war," which pitted nuclear nations against one another in a futile stalemate, it fell of its own weight in almost all its major centers.

The small spark figuratively ignited at Seneca Falls never produced revolutions, usurpation of power or wars. Yet it led to a transformation of consciousness and a movement of empowerment on behalf of half the human race, which hardly has its equal in human history.

Until very recently, the Seneca Falls convention of 1848 was not recognized as significant by historians, was not included in history textbooks, not celebrated as an important event in public schools, never mentioned in the media or the press. In the 1950s, the building where it was held, formerly the Wesleyan chapel, was used as a filling station. In the 1960s, it housed a laundromat. It was only due to the resurgence of modern feminism and the advances of the field of Women's History that the convention has entered the nation's consciousness. The establishment of Women's History Month as a national event during the Carter administration and its continuance through every administration since then has helped to educate the nation to the significance of women's role in history. Still, it took decades of struggle by women's organizations, feminist historians and preservationists to rescue the building at Seneca Falls and finally to persuade the National Park Service to turn it into a historic site. Today it is a major tourist attraction and has been enhanced by the establishment of a National Women's Hall of Fame on the site. This history of "long forgetting and short remembering" has been an important aspect of women's historic past, the significance of which we only understood as we began to study women's history in depth.

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the great communicator and propagandist of nineteenth-century feminism, has left a detailed account of the origins of the Seneca Falls convention both in her autobiography and in the monumental *History of Woman Suffrage.* The idea for such a meeting originated with her and with Lucretia Mott, when they both attended the 1840 World Antislavery Convention in London, at which representatives of female antislavery societies were denied seating and voting rights. Outraged by this humiliating experience, Stanton and Mott decided in London that they would convene a meeting of women in the United States to discuss their grievances as soon as possible. But her responsibilities as mother of a growing family intervened, and Stanton could not implement her plan until 1848, when Lucretia Mott visited her sister Martha Wright in Waterloo, a town near Seneca Falls. There, Stanton met

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with her, her hostess Jane Hunt and their friend Mary Ann McClintock. Stanton wrote: "I poured out that day the torrent of my long accumulating discontent with such vehemence and indignation that I stirred myself, as well as the rest of the party, to do or dare anything." The five drafted an announcement for a "Woman's Rights Convention" to be held at Seneca Falls on the nineteenth and twentieth of July, and placed the notice in the local paper and the abolitionist press.

THE FIVE women who issued the call to the Seneca Falls convention were hardly as naive and inexperienced as later, somewhat mythical versions of the events would lead one to believe. Lucretia Mott was an experienced and highly acclaimed public speaker, a Quaker minister and longtime abolitionist. She had attended the founding meeting of the American Antislavery Society in 1833, which admitted women only as observers. She was a founder of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and its long-term president. The fact that she was announced as the principal speaker at the Seneca Falls convention was a distinct drawing card.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "long accumulating discontent" had to do with her struggle to raise her three children (she would later have four more) and run a large household in the frequent absences of her husband Henry, a budding lawyer and Free Soil politican. Still, she found time to be involved in the campaign for reform of women's property rights in New York state, where a reform bill was passed just prior to the convention, and she had spoken before the state legislature.

Martha Wright, Jane Hunt and Mary Ann McClintock were all separatist Quakers, long active in working to improve the position of women within their church. All of them were veterans of reform and women's organizations and had worked on antislavery fairs.

The place where they held their convention was particularly suited for attracting an audience of radical thinkers. The region had for more than two decades been the center of reform and utopian movements, largely due to the economic upheavals brought by the opening of the Erie Canal and the ensuing competition with western agriculture, which brought many farmers to bankruptcy. Economic uncertainty led many to embrace utopian schemes for salvation. The region was known as the "burned-over" district, because so many schemes for reforms had swept over it in rapid succession, from the evangelical revivalism of Charles Grandison Finney, to temperance, abolition, church reform, Mormonism and the chiliastic movement of William Miller, who predicted the second coming of Christ with precision for October 12, 1843 at three A.M. The nearly one million followers of Miller had survived the uneventful passing of that night and the similarly uneventful revised dates of March or October 1844, but their zeal for reform had not lessened.

The men and women who gathered in the Seneca Falls Wesleyan chapel were not a national audience; they all came from upstate New York and represented a relatively narrow spectrum of reform activists. Their local background predisposed them to accept radical pronouncements and challenging proposals. Most of them were abolitionists, the women having been active for nearly ten years in charitable, reform, and antislavery societies. They were experienced in running petition campaigns and many had organized antislavery fund-raising fairs. Historian Nancy Isenberg, who has analyzed the origins and affiliations of those attending the convention, showed that many were religious dissidents, Quakers, who just two months prior had separated from their more traditional church and would shortly form their own group, New York Congregationalist Friends. Another dissident group were Wesleyan Methodists who had been involved in a struggle within their church about the role of women and of the laity in church governance. Yet another group came from the ranks of the temperance movement. Among the men in attendance several were local lawyers with Liberty Party or Free Soil affiliations. Also present and taking a prominent part in the deliberations was Frederick Douglass, the former slave and celebrated abolitionist speaker, now editor of the *North Star*.

Far from representing a group of inexperienced housewives running their first public meeting, the majority of the convention par-

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ticipants were reformers with considerable organizational experience. For example, Amy Post and six other women from Rochester who came to Seneca Falls were able to organize a similar woman's rights convention in Rochester just two weeks later. One of the significant aspects of the Seneca Falls convention is that it was grounded in several organizational networks that had already existed for some time and could mobilize the energies of seasoned reform activists.

Most of the reformers attending had family, church and political affiliations in other areas of the North and Midwest. It was through them that the message of Seneca Falls spread quickly and led to the formation of a national movement. The first truly national convention on Woman's Rights was held in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850. By 1860 ten national and many local woman's rights conventions had been organized.

The Declaration of Sentiments

The first day of the Seneca Falls meeting was reserved to women, who occupied themselves with debating, paragraph by paragraph, the Declaration of Sentiments prepared by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Resolutions were offered, debated and adopted. At the end of the second day, sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed their names to a Declaration of Sentiments, which embodied the program of the nascent movement and provided a model for future woman's rights conventions. The number of signers represented only one third of those present, which probably was due to the radical nature of the statement.

The inequities cited and the demands raised in this Declaration were not entirely novel. Like all major social and intellectual movements, feminism has many and diverse antecedents.

BY SELECTING the Declaration of Independence for their formal model and following its preamble almost verbatim, except for the insertion of gender-neutral language, the organizers of the convention sought to base their main appeal on the democratic rights embodied in the nation's founding document.

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton addresses the Convention.

They also put the weight and symbolism of this revered text behind what was in their time a radical assertion: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal."

The feminist appeal to natural rights and the social contract had long antecedents on the European continent, the most important advocate of it being Mary Wollstonecraft. Her work was well known in the United States, where the same argument had been well made by Judith Sargent Murray, Frances Wright, Emma Willard, Sarah Grimké and Margaret Fuller.

The second fundamental argument for the equality of woman was religious. As stated in the Declaration:

> Resolved, That woman is man's equal—was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.

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And one of the "grievances" is:

> He [man] has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign to her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

The feminist argument based on biblical grounds can be traced back for seven hundred years prior to 1848, but the women assembled at Seneca Falls were unaware of that fact, because of the nonexistence of anything like Women's History. They did know the Quaker argument, especially as made in her public lectures by Lucretia Mott. They had read Sarah Grimké's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, and several of the resolutions in fact followed her text. They knew the biblical argument by Ann Lee of the Shakers and they echoed the antislavery biblical argument, applying it to women.

The Declaration departed from precedent in its most radical statement:

> The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her.

The naming of "man" as the culprit, thereby identifying patriarchy as a system of "tyranny," was highly original, but it may have been dictated more by the rhetorical flourishes of the Declaration of Independence than by an actual analysis of woman's situation. When it came to the list of grievances, the authors departed from the text and became quite specific.

WOMAN HAD been denied "her inalienable right to the elective franchise"; she had no voice in the making of laws; she was deprived of other rights of citizenship; she was declared civilly dead upon marriage; deprived of her property and wages; discriminated against in case of divorce, and in payment for work. Women were denied equal access to education and were kept out of the professions, held in a subordinate position in Church and State and assigned by man to the domestic sphere. Man has endeavored to destroy woman's self-respect and keep her dependent.

They concluded that in view of the disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country

> . . . we insist that [women] have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

It has been claimed by historians, and by herself, that Stanton's controversial resolution advocating voting rights for women—the only resolution not approved unanimously at the convention—was her most important original contribution. In fact, Sarah and Angelina Grimké had advocated woman's right to vote and hold office in 1838, and Frances Wright had done so in the 1830s. It was not so much the originality, as the inclusiveness of the listed grievances that was important.

The Declaration claimed universality, even though it never mentioned differences among women. Future woman's rights conferences before the Civil War would rectify this omission and pay particular attention to the needs of lower class and slave women.

While grievances pertaining to woman's sexual oppression were not explicitly included in the Declaration of Sentiments, they were very much alive in the consciousness of the leading participants. Elizabeth Cady Stanton had already in 1848 begun to include allusions to what we now call "marital rape" in her letters and soon after the Seneca Falls convention made such references explicit, calling on legislatures to forbid marriage to "drunkards." She soon became an open advocate of divorce and of the right of women to leave abusive marriages. Later woman's rights conventions would include some of these issues among their demands, although they used carefully guarded language and focused on abuses by "drunkards." This was a hidden feminist theme of the mainstream woman's temperance movement in the 1880s and caused many temperance women to embrace woman suffrage. What we now call "a woman's right to her body" was already on the agenda of the nineteenth-century woman's rights movement.

It was the confluence of a broad-ranging programmatic declaration with a format famil-

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iar and accessible to reformers that gave the event its historical significance. The Seneca Falls convention was the first forum in which women gathered together to *publicly* air their own grievances, not those of the needy, the enslaved, orphans or widows. The achievement of a public voice for women and the recognition that women could not win their rights unless they organized, made Seneca Falls a major event in history.

Rights and Emancipation

What progress has been made in the status of women since 1848?

It is useful to think of women's demands as encompassing two sets of needs: women's rights and women's emancipation.

Women's rights essentially are civil rights—to vote, to hold office, to have access to education and to economic and political power at every level of society on an equal basis with men. They include property rights, the right to one's earnings, the right to sue and be sued, the right to dispose of property. These rights are demanded on the basis of a claim to *equality*: as citizens, as members of society, women are by rights equal and must therefore be treated equally. All of the rights here listed are based on the acceptance of the status quo—all women ask is to be admitted to it on a basis of equality. These are essentially reformist demands.

Women's emancipation is freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by reason of sex; self-determination and autonomy. Oppressive restrictions are biological restrictions due to sex, as well as socially imposed ones. Thus, women's bearing and nursing children is a biological given, but the assignment to women of the major responsibility for the rearing of children and for housework is socially imposed.

Self-determination means being free to decide one's own destiny, to define one's own social role. Autonomy means earning one's status, not being born into it or marrying it. It means financial and cultural independence, freedom to choose one's own lifestyle, regardless of sex. It means freedom to define issues, roles, laws and cultural norms on an equality with men. The demands for emancipation are based on stressing women's difference from men, but also on stressing women's difference from other women. They are radical demands, which can only be achieved by transforming society for men and women, equalizing gender definitions for both sexes, assigning the reproductive work of raising the next generation to both men and women, and reorganizing social institutions so as to make such arrangements possible.

Women, just like men, are placed in society as individuals *and* as citizens. They are both equal and different. The demand for women's emancipation always includes the demand for women's rights, but the reverse is not true. Generally speaking, women's rights have been won or improved upon in many parts of the world in the past 150 years. Women's emancipation has not yet been won anywhere.

The movement started at Seneca Falls called itself the *woman's* rights movement—embracing both concepts, that of the individual woman as a person and as a citizen demanding rights. As we have seen, its program, from the start, embraced both—by demanding legal, property, civil rights; and by demanding changes in gender-role definition and in woman's rights to her own body. As the nineteenth-century movement matured, there developed some tension between advocates of these two different sets of demands, with the mainstream focusing more and more on legal and property rights, while radicals and outsiders, like sex reformers, birth control advocates, and socialist feminists demanded more profound social changes.

The twentieth-century women's movement adopted the plural "women" to show inclusiveness and to reflect the fact that it was a broadly based, coalition-building movement. But the same distinctions and tensions as in the first wave of feminism have appeared in the "new feminism" that started in the 1960s. One wing focused mainly on women's rights—adoption of ERA, legal/political rights and representation and civil rights for women of different classes, races and sexual orientations. The other wing began as "radical women's liberation" and later branched off into many more specialized groups working on abortion rights; protection of women against violence and sexual harassment; the opening up to women

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of nontraditional occupations; self-empowerment and the creation of women's cultural institutions, ranging from lesbian groupings to women's music festivals and pop culture. The two informally defined wings of the movement often overlapped, sometimes collaborated on specific narrow issues, and recently have worked more and more on bridge-building. The Women's Studies movement has struggled long and hard to bridge the two wings and encompass them educationally. Further, new forms of feminism by women of color or women who define themselves as "different" from the majority in various ways have sprung up and served their own constitutencies. Their existence has not weakened the movement, as its critics like to claim, but has strengthened it immensely by grounding it more firmly in different constituencies.

LET US NOT forget, ever, that when we talk about women's rights we talk about the rights of half the human race. No one expects all men to have the same interests, issues or demands. We should therefore never expect women to have one agenda, one set of issues or demands.

The women's rights demands first raised at Seneca Falls have in the United States been generally achieved for middle-class white women. They have been partially achieved for working-class women and women of color, but progress has been very uneven. The continuing horrendous gaps in life expectancy, infant mortality and survival rates between white and African-American women is but one illustration of this unevenness. The progress on economic issues, such as equal wages, equal access to credit, equal treatment in home-ownership and insurance availability has also varied by class and race, with much remaining to be done.

The feminization of poverty and the increasing income gap between the rich and the poor have turned many legal gains won by women into empty shells. An example is the way in which legal restrictions on women's right to choose abortion have fallen more heavily on poor women than on the well-to-do. The uneven availability of child care for working mothers is another example.

The cultural transformation on which demands for woman's emancipation build, has been enormous. Many demands that seemed outrageous 150 years ago are now commonly accepted, such as a woman's right to equal guardianship of her children, to divorce, to jury duty, to acceptance in nontraditional occupations. Female police and fire officers and female military personnel are accepted everywhere without question. Women's participation in competitive sports is another area in which progress has been great, though it is far from complete. Many other feminist demands that seemed outrageously radical thirty years ago have become commonplace today—the acceptance of lesbians as "normal" members of the community; single motherhood; the criminal character of sexual harassment and marital rape. The acceptance of such ideas is still uneven and different in different places, but generally, the feminist program has been accepted by millions of people who refuse to identify themselves as "feminists." What critics decry as the splintering and diffusion of the movement is actually its greatest strength today.

It should also be recognized that the aims of feminism are transformative, but its methods have been peaceful reform, persuasion and education. For 150 years feminists have organized, lobbied, marched, petitioned, put their bodies on the line in demonstrations, and have overcome ancient prejudices by heroic acts of self-help. Whatever gains were won, had to be won step by step, over and over again. Nothing "was given" to women; whatever gains we made we have had to earn. And perhaps the most precious "right" we have won in these two centuries, is the right to know our own history, to draw on the knowledge and experience of the women before us, to celebrate and emulate our heroines and finally to know that "greatness" is not a sexual attribute.

What Meaning Does Seneca Falls Hold Today?

- It shows that a small group of people, armed with a persuasive analysis of grievances and an argument based on generally held moral and religious beliefs, can, if they are willing and able to work hard at organizing, create a transformative mass movement.
- The fact that it took seventy-two years of

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organized effort for American women to win the vote shows that social transformation and legal change is a slow process. The women who launched a small movement in 1848 had to learn to stay with it over nearly four generations. They had to build, county by county, state by state, the largest grassroots movement of the nineteenth century and then build it again in the twentieth century to transform the right to vote into the right to equal representation.

• Revolutionaries splutter and flare up like rockets in the night. Those who transform nonviolently sign up for the long duration, through good times and bad—sustaining the warmth necessary for growth like a banked fire.

• Seneca Falls and the movement it spawned show that legal changes, hard won though they are, remain useless and can be reversed, unless social and cultural transformations sustain them.

• The feminist program proclaimed at Seneca Falls spoke to vast constituencies of women. The worldwide movement of women for their rights and for emancipation has steadily progressed and is irreversible, although of necessity it has progressed at an uneven pace, due to different historical and cultural conditions in different countries.

• Over the past 150 years all of the grievances listed at Seneca Falls have been resolved or at least dealt with, though new inequities and grievances arise in each generation. The "specter that haunted Europe" left some gains, but mostly bloodshed, terror and devastation in its wake, and most of the inequities it sought to adjust are still with us. Feminism has behind it a record of solid gains without the costs of bloody war and revolution.

Although the media and many politicians with monotonous frequency declare feminism to be dead, many of its goals have been accomplished and its momentum, worldwide, is steadily rising. It will continue to live and grow, as long as women anywhere have "grievances" they can proclaim and as long as they are willing and able to organize to rectify them. •

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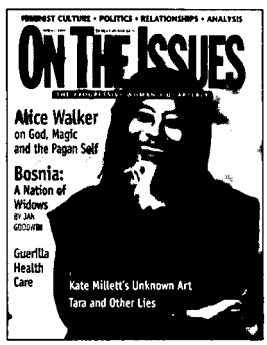

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The Irrepressible Left

Robin Blackburn

Some advanced thinkers would like to deprive us of the distinction between left and right, but a world that is getting more unequal and insecure, more divided and dangerous, belies such talk. There have always been issues and policies that are not securely anchored to one end of the political spectrum. Welfare regimes have been nurtured by the conservative right as well as by communists, by liberals as well as by nationalists, by fascists as well as by social democrats. Politics is about negotiating alliances and striving for the upper hand; concessions of one sort or another have always been indispensable to brokering coalitions and establishing legitimacy. Nevertheless, through all the fog of claim and counterclaim, those who strive for larger and more-inclusive rights, for greater equality, for more-adequate public provision, and for democratic governance of the economy, in doing so define themselves as the left. The right, by contrast, is willing to tolerate or encourage inequality and exclusion on the grounds that they promote market efficiency or correspond to some natural hierarchy or are required by respect for established property rights.

The populism of the radical right, the libertarianism of some free marketeers, and the political indeterminacy of issues of individual morality mean that alignment along the left-right spectrum by no means exhausts the language of political division. But it remains fundamental nonetheless. Europe famously gave birth to the distinction with the French Revolution; over two hundred years later there is still a formalized left-right spectrum in European politics, as the arrangement of the European Parliament testifies. Commentators have little difficulty identifying most Green groups with the left because they oppose laissez-faire economics, come down on the egalitarian side of most arguments, and resist chauvinist and militarist politics. Likewise, some regional or national groups lean to the left and others to the right; disputes concerning where members should sit are very rare. In the United States political differentiation has long been weaker because of the power of money and because of its archaic system of representation. But Washington commentators still refer to the left of the Democratic Party or the right of the Republicans and their discourse is quite intelligible. In Moscow in the late eighties and early nineties the left referred to those who supported Mikhail Gorbachev or pressed him to go further; in the circumstances of the time these were the opponents of bureaucratic privilege and corruption. Today a number of these liberals now exercise power themselves, looting the public even more flagrantly than their predecessors. These people are now, without difficulty, identified as the right. For a time the Russian Communists were able, by trading on their name and voicing the concerns of those afflicted by shock therapy, to play the part of the left, but before long their flirtations with the chauvinist right, their evident biddability, and their basic subservience to Boris Yeltsin undermined their credibility as a force of the left. In other postcommunist states the left-right dichotomy is also evident notwithstanding the very powerful forces tending to homogenize politics.

The basic left-right distinction is a crude binary that only announces the first of a succession of distinctions and combinations. But it is nevertheless an essential dimension of political choice. Where it is attenuated this is itself a sign that democratic political life is limited and probably threatened.

The new politics of identity and ecology do

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not challenge the left-right distinction, though in any actual movement that distinction has always existed along with identities that could not be wholly specified in terms of the political spectrum. Anyone who has read the fundamental texts of the German Social Democrats (SPD), the first organized Marxist party, realizes the importance to them of discourses relating to sexual rights, nationality, and the environment, as well as to class and capital. August Bebel's hugely popular writings on the "woman question" might not satisfy contemporary feminists, but were certainly more progressive than the sexual politics of any bourgeois political leader of the time, as was the early SPD's parliamentary support for the civic rights of homosexuals. Today's new social movements very properly challenge the onward and upward vision of harmonious progress nourished by classical liberalism. But they have not thereby faulted the principle of equality or disproved that our world must accommodate a new collectivism. Equality of respect and an equal claim on material resources support one another. Indeed, equality of respect prescribes a generous measure of liberty and informs such luminous watchwords as "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" and "the free development of each is the precondition for the free development of all."

Although the vision of the classical left still has much to recommend it, I am not urging that we simply need to continue asserting the agenda of historical social democracy or to revive the social planning of the postwar Golden Age or to rediscover true socialism. The left in the English-speaking countries still needs to draw on the legacy of the sixties New Left, with its salutary rejection of state paternalism and national reformism. The anarchy of the global economy can no longer be tamed by either the Keynesian welfare state or communist autarchy. However, the antistatism and cosmopolitanism of so many of the new social movements—which one can trace to remote New Left origins—are simply a starting point. It is the new setting of global capitalism that necessarily furnishes both the problem and elements of the new collectivist solution that would give substance to the noble aspirations of the historic left.

THE NEW political economy offers vantage points for democratic intervention that are quite different from those that gave birth to social democracy and communism. A strange combination of fiscal regulation and class struggle has resulted—in Britain, the United States, and elsewhere—in a new pseudocollectivist financial superstructure that we might provisionally call "gray capitalism": partly because it is based on retiree funds and partly because the property claims involved remain unclear. When trade unions negotiate on behalf of their members, the issue of retirement provision often looms large. In the past, management was tempted to make concessions in this area because future obligations to retirement funds did not figure on the balance sheet. Politicians have liked to offer tax concessions to encourage citizens to save for old age; the cost of this to the public treasury is not readily evident, while it promises to remove some of the strain from public social-security provision. Fiscally privileged pension, insurance, and retirement funds set up in the name of employees now own nearly half of the stock of large corporations. Yet under trustee law, the interests of the supposed beneficiaries of these funds are subject to extremely narrow and rigid interpretation by the trustees or fiduciaries. These funds, which now determine the pattern of economic activity, are subject to the notorious short-termism and "herd instinct" of financial managers. The extraordinarily irresponsible activities of these managers are, bizarrely enough, rewarded by special tax exemptions and mandated by trustee law.

Karl Marx was surely right to insist that the pattern of social relations is always determined by what happens to the economic surplus. There was a time when national tax-and-spend policies could bring about socialization of a portion of the surplus. But global competition now sets narrower limits on this. In the end, social democratic reform policies could always be sabotaged by capital outflows, as happened in both France and Sweden in the 1980s. The now-prevailing structures of gray capitalism actually increase this vulnerability

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by widening the numbers of those who might appear to have something to gain from capital flight. Yet at another level, the pension and insurance funds could offer trade unions and social movements an extra front along which to press their claims. They can ask why employees should be forced to invest in corporations that flout workers' rights or menace the environment or simply neglect to invest in sustainable development. And they can ask why funds that recognize no social obligations should continue to receive fiscal privileges.

Gray capitalism is by no means exempt from the crisis and conflict with which we rightly associate earlier versions of this mode of production. The corporate elite still confronts labor, and has to reckon on a state that does not always do its bidding. But it is potentially vulnerable to challenge from a new quarter. Now to a greater extent than in the past it finds itself answerable to other "stakeholders": consumers, the community, and a layer of owners that includes about half the workforce. In formal legal terms, this new vulnerability is very modest because of the negligible obligations imposed on the pension funds and the negligible rights accorded to policy holders. In the United States, as in the United Kingdom, the precise rights of pension fund beneficiaries are a notorious gray area under existing legislation. But even those who sing the praises of "pension fund excellence" find it difficult to deny that the interests of the beneficiaries should be accorded unambiguous priority.[1] Neoliberal ideology prescribes its own myopic and atomistic definition of the interests of policy holders, of course, but it is by challenging such definitions that a new collectivism may be constructed. Even within the narrow limits of prevailing legislation some social funds and prolabor funds have been established.[2] If retirement funds could claim the maximum tax exemption only by complying with social priorities in making their investments, then a mighty new lever of economic and social policy would have been established.

The New Left may have overdone "national nihilism," but its profound skepticism concerning the workings of those two magnificent antiques—the U.S. Constitution and the British Crown-in-Parliament—is a necessary ingredient if we are to get beyond the impotent bluster of radical patriotism. Political arrangements that were already conservative at the close of the eighteenth century now need a radical democratic overhaul. Although the accumulation process cannot be tackled, or even restrained, solely from the heights of state power, central states still have a role to play in corralling the wild forces of capitalist accumulation. Neither the U.S. Senate nor the British House of Lords are remotely plausible repositories of popular will or agencies of egalitarian economics. Because the institutions of what Daniel Lazare has called "the frozen republic" were initially designed to give property a free rein, it would be particularly foolish for socialists to suppose that they are apt for calling capitalism to account. Employees and policy holders will need new laws and institutions if their interests are to prevail. As recently as ten years ago it was impossible to question the British monarchy or the first-past-the-post electoral system. Attempts to introduce a Scottish Parliament and a Northern Irish assembly were defeated. But today republicanism has suddenly become respectable; a government commission is studying electoral reform and new democratic bodies are to take over in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In the United States, ruling institutions seem almost impervious to reform, whether from right or left. Yet at the same time the prestige of politicians is low and the taint of corruption haunts both Congress and presidency. The defeat of the ERA shows how resistant U.S. institutions are to even modest amendment. Sometimes it might seem easier to envisage the end of capitalism than the reform of the U.S. Senate. Yet in the Progressive era it did prove possible to replace indirect by direct elections. Today, in the epoch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and a new wave of social movements, even the most rigid institutions may need to adapt. NAFTA claims to pay some attention to ecological concerns and the condition of labor, yet lacks even the nominal democratic accountability embodied by the European Parliament. The United States has at least a collective memory of the democratic way of tackling

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such issues—the Constitutional Convention. And electoral reform of the first-past-the-post system could be achieved even short of this, thus furnishing more scope for the distinctive programmatic politics of the left.

Perception of the need for democratic reform is likely to go hand in hand with a new program of social advance. The implication of the argument sketched above is, in part, that citizens should be empowered by being given a direct say in the management of funded social-security provision. But this is only one aspect of the required structural reforms, since it is also necessary to establish vehicles and regulations that embody a new definition of the public interest. Simply making funds more accountable to their existing members is not enough, both because many are now excluded from such provision and because democratic regulation of pension funds critically involves the allocation of tax privileges. Funded social provision should be available to every citizen and no tax privileges should be given to any retirement fund that pursues its members' immediate interests at the expense of the wider community. Nevertheless, measures favorable to the beneficiaries of existing funds can be combined with regulations that assert social priorities. Progressive lawyers are already exploring definitions of policy-holder interest that refer to the "whole person" and not simply the fiction of the isolated individual. On the one hand there is good reason for employees to avoid investing much of their savings in the firm or branch that employs them, but on the other hand employees do have an interest in living in a region with a decent social infrastructure and a variety of sources of employment. In the seventies and eighties the Swedish trade unions pressed for the establishment of regional Wage-Earner Funds, to which corporations were obliged to contribute, as an expression of such a social logic. Their failure to win this reform set the scene for the subsequent destruction of the Swedish welfare model.[3]

The pay-as-you-go method of funding pensions and welfare had the great merit of exemplifying civic universalism and redistribution. But these gains have been eroded by the growth of tax-privileged second-tier systems and by the failure of governments to maintain adequate levels of universal provision. In the United States, President Bill Clinton now suggests that better use be made of the surplus in the Social Security fund while in the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Tony Blair has promised that all citizens will benefit from a state-funded "stakeholder" pension and insurance scheme. Even right-wing politicians now toy with proposals for endowing all citizens with their own insurance and pension fund. Notably absent from these proposals is any notion that the investment of such funds should obey a logic of social priority. Instead, citizens are urged to place their faith in the stock market and its "prudent experts" at a time when the latter have bought into a gigantic bubble economy, based on an extraordinary speculative inflation of assets. The approach advocated above would supersede the stockholder model of capital markets with, in the first place, a more constant and committed relationship between funds and firms, by taxes levied on short-term speculative holdings.

The interpretation of the "stakeholder pension" outlined here aims to strengthen and democratize key institutions within civil society. But it does not postulate civil society as a sphere of innate virtue—and government and state as a realm of necessary alienation. The inegalitarian impetus in civil society needs to be reversed and the public context of social life asserted. The proposal sketched here would be egalitarian, and thus genuinely of the left, only if there were a progressive tax regime and generous public provision for carers and the unemployed. The tax concessions available to socially responsible funds might be allowed only for the standard tax band, so that higher earners would still pay the difference between the standard and the higher rate. If the generalized introduction of such concessions threatened to reduce the overall tax take, then more reliance could be placed on consumption taxes. As Roberto Unger has pointed out, countries with generous social provision, such as Germany or France, often fund it through levies on consumption.[4]

In my view the case for the socialization

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of the accumulation process is already overwhelming. It is one that any public employee, any trade unionist, any college professor, can advance in direct, albeit modest, ways in the management of their own retirement funds. But to impinge in a serious way, a new scale of priorities will have to be embodied in new laws and new institutions. I have accorded the socialization of investment a certain prominence here because it furnishes a point of convergence for different egalitarian, democratic, and ecological movements. Moreover, reforms that do not begin to socialize investment will always be at the mercy of capitalists and financial managers, who are quick to lose confidence in governments of the left. Ultimately a socialization drive would require social-investment boards accountable to particular groups. To distribute risk evenly and discourage corporate privilege, it would be necessary for individuals to sign up for, say, a minimum of at least three different funds. But though individuals would have areas of choice, the funds themselves should be collectively owned if they are not themselves to be the plaything of market forces. As it happens, a very significant cost advantage accrues to collective funds compared to individual schemes, since the latter inescapably incur heavy administration charges—unless the individual concerned has vast resources. Privately managed funds must also furnish profits to the owners, a charge that collectively owned funds escape.[5]

The new salience of pension funds and provision for old age places on the agenda a notion that had all but disappeared, that of planning. The currently prevailing forces of international competition constitute a formidable obstacle to any such vision. As Robert Brenner has recently reminded us, the world economy is currently structured by a ferocious process of intercontinental rivalry.[6] Yet within the new globalized context there is also evidence of both a "weak socialization" and of renewed oppositional class struggle. The "weak socialization" includes the apparatus of what I have here called "gray capitalism." As currently structured, it is certainly part of the problem. But it creates a new context in which many millions of producers and consumers are also, albeit in a shadowy fashion, owners of collective means of production. Even if many trade-union leaders, and leaders of left-wing parties, wish to go on in the old way and respect the existing property system, the new structures themselves set up a continual possibility, and even necessity, of asserting a degree of "strong socialization," in the shape of collective control over the path of accumulation. While it is far from inevitable that strategies of "strong socialization" will succeed, it is certain that they will be attempted, with the consequent possibility that trial and error will lead to increasing effectiveness.

I have chosen to stress an egalitarian and democratic collectivist reform of gray capitalism because I wish to resist the siren song of New Age political and social thinking, promising altered consciousness within an unchanged political economy. The chaos and disarray of international capital render such fatalism absurd and give us reason to believe that a new hour of reckoning is at hand. ●

Robin Blackburn is editor of *New Left Review*, the author of *The Making of New World Slavery* and *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, and Senior Research Fellow 1998–1999, Kings College, Cambridge.

1. See, for example, Keith P. Ambachtsheer and D. Don Ezra, *Pension Fund Excellence: Creating Value for Stakeholders* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998), pp. 4-12.

2. See Rebecca Bauen, "Pensions for Progress: Targeting Union Retirement Money to Save Jobs," *Dollars and Sense*, January-February 1996, pp. 14-17.

3. See the contribution by Jonas Pontusson to *Mapping the West European Left*, edited by Perry Anderson and Peter Gowan (London: Verso, 1994).

4. See Roberto Unger, *Democracy Realized* (New York and London: Verso, 1998).

5. A point conceded even by the World Bank's report on pensions with its heavy bias toward private provision. See *Averting the Old Age Crisis* (Washington: World Bank, 1994), pp. 312-3.

6. See Robert Brenner, "The Economics of Global Turbulence: A Special Report on the Global Economy, 1950-98," *New Left Review* 229 (May-June 1998).

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How Fast Track Was Derailed

Lessons for Labor's Future

David Glenn

THE NOVEMBER 1997 defeat of "fast track" was arguably the AFL-CIO's greatest public-policy triumph in a generation. The failure of Congress to extend presidential fast track negotiating authority—which would next have been used in an attempt to broaden the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to include Chile and other South American countries—came as an enormous shock to the Washington establishment and to the nation's pundits. As late as mid-October, nearly every published commentary predicted that fast track would pass Congress by a comfortable margin. In the wake of fast track's defeat, the press was quickly filled with howling editorials that generally included the words "protectionism," "dinosaur," and "hysteria."

The nation's guardians of opinion might not have been so stunned if they spent more time in places like Jamestown, Kentucky. During the very week of fast track's congressional collapse, the Fruit of the Loom company announced plans to lay off nearly a thousand nonunion workers at its plant there, taking their jobs to Mexico or the Caribbean. "I'm a United States citizen, I'm losing my job," one of these workers told a reporter. "How is NAFTA so great?"

The press might also have found it instructive to visit Tijuana, Mexico, where, at the moment of fast track's defeat, workers at a Han Young auto parts plant were fighting for recognition of their independent trade union. The struggle at Han Young has highlighted the emptiness of NAFTA's promises: prosperity continues to elude the working class in Mexico, whose average wages have dropped by 25 percent in real terms since NAFTA was ratified. And corruption of various sorts is still epidemic in the administration of Mexican labor law. (Regional authorities in Baja have bent the rules in their efforts to deny the Han Young workers their union.)

During the last three decades, the U.S. Congress hasn't exactly centered its attention on the plight of workers in Jamestown—much less on that of workers in Tijuana. But in the fast track battle, these workers' voices were—at least temporarily—heard loud and clear. It was union members who delivered over a hundred thousand postcards to their representatives. It was union members who made hundreds of visits to congressional district offices and placed over ten thousand phone calls to Congress. It was union members who held dozens of rallies and teach-ins on trade. The anti–fast track coalition included environmentalists, consumer groups, and human-rights organizations—all of which played crucial roles. But it was labor that did the heavy lifting.

It's worth exploring this campaign closely. Fast track renewal, like NAFTA before it, was opposed by a solid majority of U.S. citizens. Why did public opinion prevail this time when it did not in 1993? It was partly a matter of luck; the Clinton administration made several crucial blunders that helped spell fast track's doom. But luck was not the entire story: the fast track battle reflected a new level of willpower and skill in the labor movement's institutions. Union members throughout the country were outraged and anxious at the prospect of an expanded NAFTA—and their anger and fear found effective expression in the labor movement's lobbying and grassroots activism.

The fast track campaign, for all its success, also revealed two severe challenges that still

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face the labor movement. The first is a crisis of communication. Although coverage of labor has improved in recent years, in the case of fast track, the mainstream press often seriously distorted labor's positions and labor's tactics. The second challenge concerns the shape of future trade agreements. The 1997 fast track legislation was easy to oppose—it was sculpted by conservative Republicans and embodied a worst-case scenario. But before long, the Clinton administration or its successor is likely to put forward a more moderate bill—perhaps with tepid, NAFTA-style "side agreements" on labor and the environment, perhaps even with provisions that appear truly progressive. How will labor reply then? Throughout the 1997 fast track battle, union spokespeople consistently acknowledged the inevitability and desirability of global economic integration; the crucial point, they said, is that integration requires appropriate safeguards for workers, consumers, and the environment. But it's not clear that labor leaders—much less the rank and file—have a unified or well-developed sense of what these safeguards might look like. At some point Congress will take up a more palatable trade proposal, and labor will need to be prepared to respond. (Indeed, the recent congressional arguments over the "African Growth and Opportunity Act," which would require the United States to begin negotiating NAFTA-style agreements with certain sub-Saharan countries, remind us that trade debates are not going to ebb any time soon.)

In early 1997, the prospects for defeating fast track looked grim. The conventional wisdom was that the NAFTA battle had been, as two political scientists wrote in 1996, evidence of "the low and declining electoral power of organized labor." The economy was far stronger in 1997 than it had been in 1993, with unemployment at twenty-five-year lows—and it was commonly believed that this prosperity would mute public anxiety about trade issues. And labor itself was divided about how to proceed. At the February 1997 meeting of the AFL-CIO's executive council, a few voices expressed worry about appearing to "betray" President Clinton just months after labor had been a crucial part of his re-election machinery. More seriously, there were extended arguments about whether to trust and support any labor-friendly provisions that the administration might include in fast track legislation.

As it turned out, this last question was moot: the bill contained no labor-friendly provisions. Throughout the spring, U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky worked the halls of Congress, trying to cobble together a politically feasible compromise on the question of labor and environmental standards. But the Republicans, whose chief negotiator was House trade subcommittee chair Bill Archer of Texas, insisted that trade agreements must *not* address such issues. In August, the administration finally agreed to Republican provisions—more restrictive than any that had appeared in earlier fast track legislation—that forbade U.S. trade negotiators from taking up questions of labor rights, consumer safety, and environmental standards, except in matters "distinctly and directly related to trade." The administration's calculus apparently was that Republican support had to be locked in first—and that, as in 1993, just enough Democrats could be bullied and bribed at the last minute to push the bill through.

The Archer language meant that the battle would be clean and stark: Congress would be considering one of the least democratic models of economic integration. As John Sweeney put it in testimony before Congress, "To replicate the failed trade policies of the past, to write more rules to protect corporate interests at the expense of everyone else, is simply unacceptable. . . . The proposal put forward by Chairman Archer . . . would be a big step backwards from the language included in the inadequate 1988 and 1991 fast track legislation, which listed 'worker rights' among the negotiating objectives, but did not limit their scope."

This threat lent a new edge to labor's efforts during the summer, as the AFL-CIO and its major affiliates began to marshal their forces. By August, the federation had set up an elaborate and detailed "stop fast track" web site; established a toll-free telephone number to allow union members to call Congress; and created a national fax-distribution network, through which the field mobilization staff sent weekly updates and talking points.

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By the time Congress returned from its summer recess, the pieces were in place. Several affiliates—especially the Teamsters, the Steelworkers, and UNITE—had strong and independent mobilizations. And far more effectively than in 1993, the AFL-CIO provided a general clearinghouse for ideas and resources. "The field mobilization department was in contact every day with the affiliates, and with our local and state reps," says Thea Lee, the federation's assistant director for public policy. "Almost every day we would have a national conference call, in which people in the field would raise concerns. And all of this was fueled by the energy of rank-and-file members, who constantly brought forward new ideas."

These tactical innovations extended into labor's inside-the-Beltway operations. The Steelworkers' efforts, for example, were coordinated by legislative director Bill Klinefelter, a veteran of the National Wildlife Federation. "For many years, it worked for the Steelworkers to lobby on an institutional basis, as major players in the economy," Klinefelter says. "But after the 1994 elections they realized that that era is dead. We're *not* part of the Establishment, and no one in Washington wants us to be. We had to remind ourselves how to do legislative business as an outsider, like an environmentalist group."

In that spirit, the Steelworkers have established a national "rapid response" program. "We've identified serious rank-and-file activists in all of our locals," says Klinefelter. "We fax bulletins to them, they go to the shop floor with messages that bear on our workers' lives, and the response is incredible. In the fast track fight, our members sent over 160,000 handwritten letters to their congressional representatives. Not petitions, not prepackaged postcards, but handwritten letters. This made a huge impression on congressional staff."

The Steelworkers have also established a Washington internship program, in which rank-and-file members live and work in D.C. for six to ten weeks. These interns apprentice under the legislative staff, attending coalition meetings and lobbying sessions on Capitol Hill. "We had a dozen interns during the fast track fight, and they made an enormous difference," says Klinefelter. "We're developing the union's next generation of leaders. And a few of them have expressed interest in running for elected office—someday I hope to be lobbying these people."

One 1997 intern, Patrick Saltkill, now serves on the Steelworkers' staff, doing legislative work and field mobilization in Tennessee. "Those weeks in Washington were one of the most tremendous experiences of my life," he says. "There was electricity throughout the campaign. People got up before dawn and worked until almost midnight. Back in 1993, before the NAFTA vote, we'd sort of gotten slack. We took certain [Democratic] votes for granted, and we let the top brass of the union do all the work. This time, it was a serious rank-and-file fight, from the beginning until the end."

By late September, when the AFL-CIO held its convention in Pittsburgh, the campaign was in full gear. The Teamsters had distributed hundreds of copies of a "stop fast track" videotape. UNITE had published forty thousand copies of a pocket-sized anti–fast track booklet. And the Federation was preparing to broadcast television and radio advertisements in the districts of two dozen undecided members of Congress.

All of these efforts—the Teamsters video, the UNITE booklet, the AFL-CIO advertisements—heavily emphasized environmental and consumer safety and human-rights themes. This choice was, to be sure, partly a matter of political calculation: polling data revealed broader public anxiety about tainted raspberries than about labor rights. But it also reflected the honest convictions of labor activists. Far more than in 1993, unions acted as an effective coalition partner with the broad range of activist trade groups. Labor staffers participated in weekly strategy meetings of the Citizens' Trade Campaign, the umbrella under which all of these groups came together. (The less palatable members of this coalition—the narrow nationalists who fly Pat Buchanan's and Ross Perot's flags—were much less prominent in the fast track fight than they had been in the NAFTA wars in 1993. But this heartening development was completely ignored in most press accounts of fast track's defeat.)

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At the Pittsburgh convention, Sweeney rallied labor for the coming battle: "The battle over fast track is important to every union in this room," he told delegates. "Craft, industrial, service, and public unions alike—because trade agreements without worker rights and human rights and environmental standards undermine the wages and jobs of us all just as they damage the communities where we live and work."

During October, congressional district offices were bombarded with messages from union members. The Steelworkers distributed new fax machines to many of their locals, whose lines were to be dedicated to sending messages from members. The Pennsylvania state AFL-CIO set up its own toll-free line to the congressional switchboard. Six hundred Steelworkers traveled to Washington by bus to meet with congressional staffs. And several unions introduced the tactic of bringing cell phones onto the shop floor, so that workers could call Congress in a coordinated fashion during breaks.

The anti–fast track mobilization reached its highest pitch during the third week of October, when Sweeney and House minority leader Richard Gephardt addressed a series of rallies in major cities. A close relationship between labor and its congressional allies extended throughout the battle. As early as March, labor staff members had been participating in meetings convened by the staffs of fast track's principal opponents: Gephardt, David Bonior, Bernie Sanders, Dennis Kucinich, and Marcy Kaptur. (Another crucial ally was California Democrat Esteban Torres, the chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Torres had supported NAFTA, but subsequently charged that the Clinton administration betrayed several of the promises it made in 1993. It had taken almost no action to clean up the Rio Grande basin's severe environmental contamination and had not moved forward with an Inter-American Development Bank.)

In early November, as the congressional leadership tried to bring the bill toward a vote, the anti–fast track coalition began a round-the-clock lobbying vigil. "We had excellent systems in place for keeping tabs on the vote counts," says Klinefelter. "And in the home stretch, as the administration began to offer pork-barrel bribes to undecided members, we were usually able to learn about those deals and embarrass the members out of accepting them."

Just before what turned out to be the final weekend, John Sweeney and the presidents of nearly every AFL-CIO affiliate union arrived in Washington to lobby members of Congress personally. "The fast track effort was the best work I've ever seen the labor movement do," says Klinefelter. "From top to bottom, everyone worked very hard. When you think that workers' voices were heard—that we were able to stymie something that the president of the United States wanted, that the business lobby wanted, that the Republican congressional leadership wanted . . . it was a huge victory for democracy."

For democratic victories to stick, however, they need to be discussed and remembered in intelligent ways. In the wake of fast track's collapse, the public conversation about trade policy and unions' political power took an unfortunate turn. If you first learned about fast track by reading newspaper editorials on the morning of November 11, you would have been told that labor won the battle by sending its lobbyists to bully and blackmail members of Congress—not that hundreds of thousands of labor activists appealed to their representatives' good judgment and to the public will. You would have been told that labor and other selfish Beltway players had scuttled a trade policy that was in the nation's best interest. You would not have been told that in 1994 narrow corporate interests squashed an earlier fast track initiative, because they found it too labor-friendly. You would have been told that the AFL-CIO was cruelly indifferent to the suffering of the working poor in developing nations not that U.S. unions and the Chilean trade-union federation had worked together to draft an acceptable framework for the extension of NAFTA to Chile.

"Our message was very clear throughout: we wanted a *different kind* of trade agreement," says Thea Lee. "But most reporters weren't

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prepared to hear that message. They have a script that calls for backward-looking, protectionist trade unionists. They don't even do us the courtesy of calling up to make sure their accounts are accurate."

In particular, the postmortem editorials on fast track tended to caricature the labor and environmental provisions labor sought. They sometimes asserted that fast track opponents were demanding that developing nations' minimum-wage levels be immediately raised to U.S. levels. In fact, the call was for something far more modest: provisions, to be included in the core language of trade agreements, that would require signatory nations to enforce *their own* labor and environmental laws effectively and consistently.

Predictably, the mainstream press devoted hundreds of column inches to the story's horse-race elements. Did the defeat signal a waning of Vice President Al Gore's presidential prospects and the rise of Gephardt? Was Clinton already a lame duck, only ten months into his second term? And, just as predictably, most press accounts did a poor job of exploring the conflict's historical context. Not a single morning-after article—not even the lengthy postmortems in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—mentioned the administration's unsuccessful efforts to revive fast track in 1994 and 1995. In those instances, the efforts were scuttled even before legislation was crafted—but not because of opposition from labor. Instead, the Republicans, under pressure from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business lobbies, strangled the proposals in their cribs, because then–U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor had introduced labor and environmental provisions.

THE MORNING-AFTER editorials almost unanimously mentioned labor's "arm twisting and horse trading" and denounced unions for corrupting the integrity of the Democratic Party. But only one major newspaper, *USA Today*, mentioned that the Republican leaders of the Ways and Means Committee had made an entire conference area in the Capitol building available to corporate lobbyists as a "war room" during the battle's home stretch.

In the days after fast track's defeat, Gephardt, Bonior, and other Democratic leaders often tried to redirect the "dinosaur" label onto fast track's corporate supporters. "This is a defeat of an old trade policy that was insisted upon by Newt Gingrich and the Republican majority," Gephardt told CNN. And David Bonior, appearing on public television the night of November 10, stressed that "What we saw this week . . . was that we are ready to move the trade issue to another level, to include labor standards, environmental standards, and food-safety standards. That is the future."

But the nation's editorialists wrote as if the anti–fast track coalition was always and everywhere disingenuous about these questions. The *Arizona Republic*: "Labor's congressional allies demand more environmental and worker protections. . . . But it is a sham, for they will vote no in any event." And the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*: "If [members of Congress] genuinely thought any new agreements should include measures to protect the environment or laborers in other countries, they could simply vow to vote against agreements that didn't contain such features. But that would be too easy. The real purpose of blocking fast track is to make sure there won't be any new trade pacts coming to Congress in the future." (This argument, of course, ignores a central fact: the Archer provision, which effectively would have prevented any measures to protect labor or the environment.)

Time and again, the nation's editorialists ignored the plain meaning of fast track opponents' words. In nearly every public pronouncement on the issue, Gephardt declared that global economic integration is inevitable and desirable—that the question is under what ground rules it will take place. But, stupefyingly, the day after fast track's collapse the editors of Gephardt's hometown newspaper, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, denounced him as if he had never said any such thing: "Mr. Gephardt should think twice about trying to ride a protectionist horse to victory in a presidential race. In the long run, it's a loser. The global economy is a reality."

A more sophisticated, but still seriously

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muddled, account appeared in the *New Republic*. In an essay titled "The Nationalist Revolt," Peter Beinart described fast track's collapse as a product of "the growing power of nationalism" in post–cold war America. This analysis does capture something important about developments within the Republican Party: of the approximately fifty House Republicans who declared their opposition to fast track, many were first- and second-termers, and some of them spoke in the hypernationalist idiom of Pat Buchanan. And these Republicans did, of course, play a pivotal role in the scuttling of fast track.

But Beinart's argument is too quick to paint the entire anti–fast track coalition with the narrow nationalist brush. Like many commentators, he makes much of the strange-bedfellows alliance that has come together under the umbrella of the grassroots Citizens Trade Campaign: the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and the AFL-CIO, together with followers of Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan. (An analogous "working group" has also developed among left- and right-wing Capitol Hill staffers and lobbyists.) But is this coalition fundamentally "nationalist," as Beinart claims, just because a few of its components are? Those fifty Republican defectors in the House were crucial—but the center of gravity in the fast track fight was with the close allies of Richard Gephardt, whose rhetoric was consistently internationalist. Beinart himself notes that the coalition "has not broadened beyond [issues of] trade and sovereignty." Well, it's had plenty of time to do so—it's been together since early 1993, when the NAFTA fight first gathered steam. It should be clear by now that the Citizens Trade Campaign is strictly a tactical alliance, albeit an interesting and effective one. Pat Buchanan is not going to embrace a labor movement whose leadership argues—as John Sweeney did in 1997—that "the question is not. . . whether we are internationalists, but what values our internationalism serves."

Will the worldwide labor movement have the vision, and the political strength, to fight for a worthy internationalism? "We now have a sort of standoff in Washington," says Thea Lee. "The adminstration has the business community screaming in one ear and progressives in the other. We just have to work to make sure that when the stalemate breaks, it breaks in a progressive direction." In the fast track fight, the U.S. labor movement demonstrated that it has the passion and the tactical savvy to shatter the elite's policy consensus. The next step will be to apply that passion to building a new trade framework—a framework that serves the democratic interests of workers in Tijuana and in Jamestown. ●

DAVID GLENN is associate editor of *Dissent*.

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The Poverty of Workfare

Dubious Claims, Dark Clouds, and a Silver Lining

Paul Street

PRESIDENT CLINTON and governors across the United States love to tell us that welfare reform is working. Reform is a friendly sounding term for this decade's explosion of state and federal initiatives that cut welfare benefits, end cash assistance to poor families, and push assistance recipients to get a job—any job—as soon as possible. Officials from the White House down cite dramatic reductions in welfare caseloads since the early 1990s and present inspiring stories as proof that such "tough love" policies—capped and epitomized by the 1996 federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act—are working. The leaders and cheerleaders of reform depict a welfare program that is being transformed from a "way of life" into a temporary assist for those who hit a pothole or two on the high roads of an expanding job market; former recipients are now successfully pursuing opportunities in a free-enterprise system replete with them.

Myths of Dependency and the Decline of Caseloads

But this tale of triumphant American values and economic betterment wrongly assumes that people need welfare mainly because they refuse to work and that wanting a decent job is the key thing required for getting and keeping one. It ignores evidence that the new welfare rules are deepening the very poverty that gives rise to the need for welfare in the first place. Although it accords strongly with core components of the American creed—the work ethic, personal responsibility, self-sufficiency/independence, fear of statism, and so on—and the widespread neoliberal notion that the "free market" provides the solution to nearly all social and political problems, it conflicts with a stark underlying reality of the contemporary economy: the shortage of adequate job opportunities for welfare recipients.

The notion that most people on welfare become dependent on it is a vicious myth. Credible social research shows that one group of recipients uses welfare only briefly and never returns. A second group cycles on and off, often for short periods and never for five straight years. Only 15 percent of recipients stay on welfare continuously for five years or more. Researchers find no solid evidence that welfare receipt by parents causes welfare dependency in children. They do discover significant labor-market participation by recipients, in part to supplement insufficient cash-assistance grants and in part because most adults on welfare actually prefer to work, even when taking a job means putting their children in day care and risking the loss of medical assistance. This research emphasizes the cycling phenomenon: most welfare recipients leave welfare for work—more than half within one year—but many also return because the jobs they are qualified to fill do not pay enough to meet basic needs. Well in advance of 1990s welfare reform, work has been the leading route out of welfare for most recipients, and recipients have used welfare primarily as a safety net, not a way of life.

Consistent with the finding that most recipients prefer work to welfare, the number of Americans receiving governmental cash assistance declined 31 percent between January 1993 and September 1997, mirroring an improved labor market. Consider the case of Adams County, Wisconsin, in the vanguard state of militant welfare reform. Between August 1995 and September 1997, the county's welfare rolls fell from 247 to 17 persons. Conservative intellectuals like the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector, who speaks

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around the country about "the Wisconsin welfare reform miracle," attribute the decline to a 1995 state initiative called "Pay for Performance," which required recipients to work. But the county's human-services director, Richard Holt, recently offered a simpler explanation to a reporter from the *Wisconsin State Journal*: the county's working poor and jobless are benefiting from an employment boom in the Wisconsin Dells region just south of the Adams County border, especially from an increase in winter tourism and the expansion of jobs being offered by the casino industry. Holt estimates that roughly nine hundred Adams County residents now find work in the Wisconsin Dells.

Although its employment opportunities are atypical, Adams County likely reflects the wider national story behind the drop in welfare rolls. A recent study by economists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Institute for Research on Poverty (which supports welfare repeal in its home state) analyzes the factors behind Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) caseload declines between 1993 and 1996, a period of significant state-level experimentation in welfare-to-work reforms. In the twenty-six states that experienced at least a 20 percent decline in per capita Aid to Families with Dependent Children caseloads between 1993 and 1996, these researchers find that 78 percent of the decline was due to economic expansion ("business cycle factors") and only 6 percent to welfare reform. Even in Wisconsin, the most aggressive state in denying assistance, these researchers attribute just 11 percent of the rolls reduction (Wisconsin caseloads fell by a national "best" 48 percent) to welfare reform and 53 percent to cyclical and seasonal fluctuations in the job market. Their numbers support the Council of Economic Advisers' findings that declining unemployment resulting from economic expansion, not welfare policy, was the single leading cause of declining U.S. welfare rolls between 1993 and 1997. Although more recent policy changes, including the 1996 federal reform, may increase caseload decline, they expect a future recession to swell the rolls, consistent with historical trends.

"Off Welfare and Worse Off"

If an expanding job market best explains the declining number of persons receiving cash assistance, what sort of opportunity is that market providing for former recipients? Without comprehensive evaluations that include systematic tracking of those who exit public assistance—no such evaluation is required under current welfare law—there is no proof that adults leaving welfare are moving out of poverty and into employment-based "self-sufficiency." At the same time, considerable anecdotal evidence is gathering to counter the tales of individual labor-market victory routinely told by government officials.

One not-so-happy story, that of Semicoe Glover, was related last December in *Business Week*. "When Glover saw welfare reform coming in Massachusetts a few years ago," wrote *Business Week* commentator Aaron Bernstein, "she decided to get her high-school equivalency degree at a local school. That helped the mother of six land a job at a Salem day care center in 1995 after 14 years on welfare. But far from lifting her out of poverty, Glover now takes home $353 every two weeks, compared with the $417 she got on welfare. She also had to buy a used car on credit for transportation to work and pay $86 a month for after school care for her children, ages 6 to 15. To make ends meet, Glover gets groceries several times a week from a local charity." The material situation of Glover's family deteriorated in a transition from nonworking to working poverty: they are "off welfare and worse off," according to Bernstein. Massachusetts and federal statisticians chalk her up as a reform victory, as someone who went from dependency to "self-sufficiency," but her need for private relief mocks that assertion.

We might also consider the case of Holland, Michigan, one of six sites for an ambitious state welfare-to-work experiment called Project Zero. In those areas, Michigan officials surveyed recipients to determine their "barriers to employment" and invited local public officials, employers, and agencies to participate in the development of a plan to help recipients overcome obstacles to steady work. The state provided one year of transitional child care, transportation, and medical assis-

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tance to people leaving welfare for work. As Jim Wallis, convenor of Call to Renewal, an antipoverty network of black churches, evangelical Christians, Catholics, and mainline Protestants, relates it, Project Zero was a momentary success in Holland—until the transitional supports ran out late last year. "About all the welfare recipients were put to work. And good church people were involved in making that happen. There were lots of jobs, and a good economy, and all the neighborliness of western Michigan. But now they're losing subsidies for transportation, child care, and food stamps. And the same Michigan church people are saying, 'What are we going to do now?' You have people with jobs and they're poorer than they were before."

A REPORT RELEASED this February by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Employment and Training Institute uses wage data from Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development to offer a rare early look at the labor-market outcomes of welfare repeal. According to its findings, only 38 percent of 7,502 adult Milwaukee welfare recipients who were dropped from family cash-assistance rolls in 1996 earned as much as a full-time minimum-wage worker would have made during the fourth quarter of that year. In those same three months, just one in six of those who lost their benefits had incomes above the poverty level and fully 34 percent had no earnings whatsoever. These statistics explain why Milwaukee saw sharp increases in homelessness and the use of soup kitchens during 1996 and 1997.

A recent New York State survey showed that only 29 percent of the more than 350,000 New York City residents dropped from the welfare rolls from July 1996 to March 1997 live in families whose heads found full- or even part-time jobs. The state counted as employed anyone who made $100 or more in three months after leaving welfare. The results were only slighter better statewide, where just over one-third of former recipients matched this remarkably low income threshold.

The report has been challenged by New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a staunch welfare-reform advocate, who criticizes the state for not considering recipients who were working off the books, were self-employed, or had moved out of the state. But Giuliani's administration has refused to release records that would permit an independent investigation or to conduct such an investigation itself. An attempt at such research by Columbia University's School of Social Work collapsed after the city insisted on the right to review and respond to any report before publication. The city's determination to prevent analysts from getting information on its welfare program has led Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson to omit New York—home to the country's largest welfare population—from a multimillion-dollar evaluation of welfare reform's impact on urban mothers and children. And thwarted in its effort to obtain the names and addresses of New York City residents leaving welfare for use in a scientific study, the *New York Times* has sued the city. None of this surprises an anonymous social-services researcher, who recently told *City Limits*, a New York magazine, that Giuliani has "no reason to cooperate with an evaluation. There's just no way the results would be positive. Why would they want anybody to know what's going on?"

Meanwhile, emergency-assistance providers and city officials in New York and throughout the country report the counterintuitive phenomenon of rising desperation among America's poorest citizens in the middle of an economic "boom." Of thirty-four cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors late last year, 81 percent said that requests for emergency food assistance rose in 1997. In what Wallis calls a "crisis of biblical proportions," emergency food and shelter requests rose by averages of 17 and 12 percent, respectively. Seventy-one percent of cities reported that local providers may have to turn people in need away. "For the very first time," Sharon Daley of Catholic Charities USA reported in December last year, "our agencies and parishes are reporting they are having to turn people away. . .the shelves are bare." And mayoral offices and charities cite cuts in welfare benefits and the insistence that recipients find work in a context of insufficient job market opportunity as the leading cause.

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Limits of Work Opportunity

Such an explanation may seem odd when the economy is being termed "as good as it gets" by editorial-page pundits and other enthusiasts of growth. The current recovery, which has reduced unemployment to a twenty-five year low, gives surface credibility to the claim that the system is generating adequate employment chances for anyone willing to work. The conventional wisdom fails to perceive, however, that the economy is developing along bipolar lines. "In my neighborhood," Wallis reports, "I never see any difference day to day on the street because of these rises in the business cycle. It doesn't make a difference to poor people. There is a whole segment of the population who are simply outside the mainstream of society."

Wallis's observation and the reports mentioned above make sense in light of recent research showing that the "amazing American jobs machine" (as a front-page article in the *Chicago Tribune* recently described the U.S. economy) of the 1990s is simply not producing sufficient "work opportunity" for people in the unskilled segment of the labor market. Ninety-two percent of the cities providing jobs data in a survey by the Mayors' Conference report that their local economies are not generating enough low-skilled employment to comply with the federal government's new work-participation requirements under the Personal Responsibility Act. That testimony is consistent with a recent study by economist Mark Weisbrot of the Washington, D.C.–based Preamble Center for Public Policy. Weisbrot found that the U.S. economy will create only about one new low-skilled job for every two adults entering the labor market under the terms of the recent federal welfare reform.

Even more troubling than a possible shortage of low-skilled jobs is the fact that they pay so little. In a recent study of six Midwestern states, Paul Kleppner of Northern Illinois University and Nikolas Theodore of the Chicago Urban League defined a livable-wage job as one that pays an annual pre-tax wage of at least $25,907. To earn this income, a person would have to work full time at thirteen dollars an hour. Kleppner and Theodore found that the odds against a former welfare recipient finding a livable-wage job in the Midwestern labor market between 1997 and 2000 are ninety-seven to one. They constructed that livable wage out of a basic budget covering the cost of household necessities and work-related expenses for a family of three, including food, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, clothing, child care, and personal care, with no budgeting for savings, recreation, or medical or other emergencies. This "livable-wage" cutoff is controversial, but even using the federal government's worse-than-Spartan poverty level of $12,278 for a family of three, long recognized as an insufficient measure of economic well-being, the Midwestern worker-to-job ratio is twenty-two to one for unskilled workers, including welfare recipients (typically among the least advantaged members of the unskilled labor pool).

Kleppner and Theodore's finding of a wide livable-wage job gap for Midwestern welfare recipients is consistent with the national calculations of political scientist John Schwarz, an expert on the country's rising number of working poor. Using conventional employment and population statistics from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, Schwarz figures that 23 percent of American households requiring minimally adequate jobs—he defines an adequate job as one paying $7.60 an hour in 1994 dollars, yielding an annual income of $15,000 a year if worked full time with no vacation—were shut out from such employment because of a structural shortage of decent jobs at the end of 1996. Challenging enough for ordinary job-seekers with years of work experience, this is the competitive job market into which states and the federal government propose to introduce millions of welfare recipients, who are disproportionately young minority women with small children, few job skills, limited education, and low scores on standardized tests of ability and achievement. Health disabilities, child-care responsibilities, domestic-violence issues, and transportation difficulties compound their employment problems.

Given their special disadvantages, argues senior economist Gary Burtless of the Brookings Institution, recipients can expect to

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make no more than six or seven dollars an hour in the current job market. Even if they could earn this wage steadily in a full-time job, he finds, most recipients will have incomes below the poverty level after paying for transportation and child care. To make matters worse, welfare reform promises to deepen the problem of low unskilled wages by expanding the supply of unskilled workers. Employers could eventually create enough jobs to employ most adults on welfare, Burtless projects, "but they would be induced to do so only if the prevailing wage for unskilled workers falls."

At the same time, dubious methodology undermines the claim that welfare recipients enjoy an abundance of labor-market possibilities. In a March 1998 press release, to take one example, Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development announced that its economy was generating seven "good jobs" for every adult resident receiving cash assistance. The department derived this remarkable statistic by dividing the state's total estimated 1998 job creation by the number of welfare recipients in Wisconsin—13,342. But in constructing its estimate, the state ignored the high skill requirements of many job openings and made no attempt to evaluate the wages and benefits of the available jobs for which people on welfare are actually qualified. It overlooked the fact that people being removed from welfare must compete for jobs with other unemployed workers. It neglected to mention that many welfare recipients are spatially and racially removed from job-rich areas of the state and lack adequate child care, transportation, and other resources to attain jobs. Consistent with these research blind spots, Wisconsin hires motivational speakers to tell welfare recipients that they can find "good jobs" if only they engage in "positive thinking" and "feeling good" about themselves.

Skimming the Cream?

Meanwhile, the program of moving people from welfare to work may have already begun to hit a brick wall. That is the conclusion of Gary Jefferson, vice president of public affairs at United Airlines, which has undertaken an ambitious effort to hire and retain welfare recipients. Most of the seven hundred people hired off public assistance by United fall in the category of what Jefferson calls "low-hanging fruit." These "easy transitions" constitute the labor market "cream" of the adult welfare population—persons with enough education and work experience to move with relative ease into the workplace on a long-term and full-time basis. But Jefferson finds that this "top tier" has already been absorbed by the expanding job market. "You evaporate that and you get into the second and third tiers. We simply cannot employ those individuals."

These concerns echo the findings of a joint study by the National Alliance of Businesses and the Welfare-to-Work Partnership, a business consortium (United is a leading member) formed to help companies hire people off welfare, which estimates that only a quarter of the country's four million adult welfare recipients are "work ready" and therefore capable of what Jefferson calls an "easy transition." The two nonprofits place half of the adult welfare population into the "investment needed" category, meaning that they are unemployable without job training. One-quarter need assistance in overcoming substance abuse and physical or mental illness as well as intensive training.

United Airlines takes its welfare-to-work responsibility to mean providing jobs, training, and retention services to top-tier recipients and convincing other employers to do the same. But Jefferson finds that the notion of employing even the cream of the welfare population is a "tough sell," especially to smaller companies, which typically lack the resources for recruiting and training recipients. Indeed, the American Management Association found that 63 percent of companies it surveyed either do not hire welfare recipients or have no well-defined program to do so.

This weak capitalist enthusiasm for tapping welfare's reserve army of labor is hardly limited, however, to smaller employers. A 1997 survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that three-quarters of the country's hundred largest firms had no programs to hire people off welfare. Even big companies that hire large numbers of low-skilled workers, such as Taco Bell, KFC, J.C. Penney, and Safeway had no such plans. A senior economist for DRI/McGraw Hill, the nation's largest eco-

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nomic consulting firm, put it this way to a reporter for the Associated Press last year: "Most large companies are trying as hard as possible to avoid this." Even more blunt was the comment of a Chamber of Commerce official who said, "If there's a molecular biologist hanging out on welfare, they may fit the potential job matrix of a major pharmaceutical company."

"Work First"

Given welfare recipients' considerable barriers to employment and employers' lack of interest in tackling those obstacles, any sincere attempt to help welfare families bridge the job gap would involve a significant government investment in training and education. But a comprehensive study of state welfare programs by Tufts University Center on Hunger and Poverty finds that only eighteen states have improved their commitment to helping recipients prepare for and find work under new plans formed to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the federal block grants that replaced Aid for Dependent Children under the Personal Responsibility Act. Twenty-three states have actually reduced their commitment to job-readiness and job finding for people on welfare in the TANF era.

Especially troubling is states' widespread refusal to permit people on welfare to include postsecondary education as an acceptable work activity, something that is leading to an exodus of recipients from community colleges and universities. Despite research showing that an overwhelming majority of recipients who earn postsecondary degrees become financially independent and that those who complete any post-secondary education have a far greater capacity to get and hold a job than those with no higher instruction, states are forcing recipients one or two semesters away from completing training for useful and relatively remunerative jobs such as surgical assistant to drop out and take dead-end, low-paying positions as sales clerks, fast-food cooks, and telephone receptionists.

In two celebrated cases, New York City and Wisconsin (the slogan of the latter's welfare program is "only work should pay") require recipients to work in unpaid, unskilled, and often degrading positions as a precondition for receiving welfare. Tens of thousands of "workfare" participants in these jurisdictions push brooms, answer phones, pick up garbage, and sort clothes (among other low-level jobs) in working conditions that are often significantly inferior to those of the regular workers performing the same tasks. Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson and New York City's Mayor Giuliani insist that workfare teaches the ennobling value of work (jolting people out of the alleged culture of dependency) and provides a springboard to "real jobs" in the private sector. The early results for Wisconsin's more than ten thousand workfare participants are as yet unclear. But a recent series in the *New York Times* on Giuliani's larger and older program, through which two hundred thousand people have passed since 1995, found that the city is using workfare recipients as cheap labor to displace relatively well-paid civil servants and is eliminating thousands from its welfare rolls for violating new work rules. At the same time, the city's "one size fits all" approach puts participants in dead-end, low-skill jobs, often despite work experience and education. The larger number of participants who lack such credentials receive little, if any, of the training, counseling, and education they will require to move permanently off welfare. As one workfare worker told the *Times*, "We don't learn anything here. The program says you come here for training, but all we do is pick up paper."

In the words of a policy guide recently posted on the Web site of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "any job is a good job and the best way to succeed in the labor market is to join it." But beneath the common reform notion that "there's no such thing as a bad job" for a person on welfare are two assumptions that find little support in common sense, recipients' testimony, or social science literature. The first holds that recipients' sense of self-worth is enhanced by any legal paid employment. The second maintains that the U.S. labor market offers remarkable chances for upward job and income mobility to any and all persons willing to work hard and honestly, no matter how humble their origins and steep their disadvantages. By this view, the possibility that welfare reform may be deep-

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ening short-term poverty for former recipients is outweighed by long-term benefits to people who abandon welfare "dependency" for work.

This perspective is dangerously indifferent to the fact that adults on family cash assistance have children whose long-term life chances depend on conditions in the here and now. "Children are only children in the short term," argues Sharon Daley of Catholic Charities USA, "and when they are hungry this year or going without health care this year it has a lifelong impact on them. We can't wait and watch this academically over a period of years." There is no acceptable moral calculus, of course, whereby children should be judged worthy of basic material supports on the perceived strength or weakness of their parents' work ethic.

And in the short term, a bad situation is likely to get worse for those at the lower end of the labor market. Whereas militant "work first" states like Michigan and Wisconsin are already requiring work from all able-bodied recipients, the Personal Responsibility Act set a two-year deadline for states to start cutting off recipients who don't get a job. The Economic Policy Institute, which calculates that this influx of welfare recipients into the low-wage job market, due to begin in the summer of 1999, will reduce by 12 percent the wages of the bottom 30 percent of wage earners. Meanwhile, thanks to de-unionization, globalization, and technological advances, unskilled wages are currently lower than at the beginning of the current recovery. Hourly wages have actually fallen 9 percent for the bottom fifth of female wage earners since 1979, to $5.79, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Add in the Personal Responsibility Act's five-year lifetime limit on cash assistance, the federal government's $60 billion cut from support services for low-income families, the near inevitability of a recession that will push unemployment rates back to "normal" levels, and states' increasing use of sanctions to slash the rolls (so that job expansion is becoming less significant as the explanation for falling caseloads), and you have a recipe for disaster for those in the lower reaches of American society.

Although a majority of Americans surveyed before the 1996 federal reform supported a two-year welfare cutoff in principle, only 25 percent supported cutting off welfare benefits if available jobs for recipients paid wages so low as to "make it difficult to support a family." Only 20 percent backed the denial of welfare to recipients who could not find a job. The national consensus in favor of welfare reform is qualified by the widespread belief that people require access to real labor-market opportunity if they are to take meaningful "personal responsibility" for their own poverty and progress. And this raises a curious possibility: conservatives' historical triumph on this issue may ironically clear the way for future progressive victories on the more fundamental issue of labor-market reform.

SEVENTEEN years ago, the Reagan administration's welfare chief, Linda McMahon, claimed that brutal cuts in human services for the nation's poorest citizens were proving to be tolerable because "we're not seeing riots. We're not seeing people rushing the doors of Congress and the White House." The logic of the Clinton administration and many state governors, who have pulled off a welfare repeal that the Reaganites could only dream about, is much the same. The people at the bottom can be driven yet further down as long as they do not disturb the more comfortable decks with noisy rebellions. Americans need to devise meaningful, long-term solutions for the nation's haunting and interrelated problems of poverty, work, and inequality. Welfare reform without meaningful labor-market reform is a social policy travesty. Here we might discern a silver lining in the dark clouds of welfare reform. By slashing the safety net and pushing more people into bad jobs, the welfare zealots of the 1990s may have unwittingly helped set the stage for meaningful debate on issues they would rather not discuss. ●

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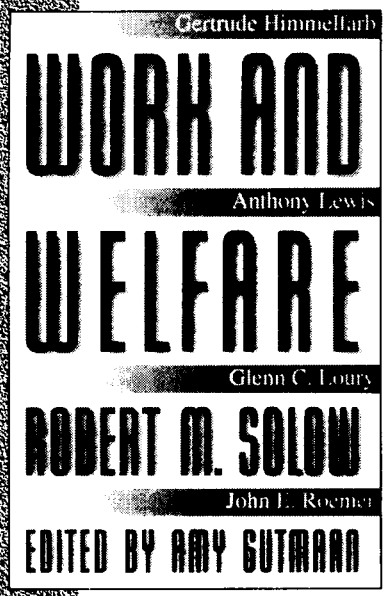

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Edited by Amy Gutmann

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Communist Crimes and French Intellectuals

Anson Rabinbach

Last fall, *Le Livre noir du Communisme: Crimes, terreur, répression* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997, 850 pp.), a massive compendium of the crimes perpetrated by communist regimes created a public sensation in France and quickly became a bestseller. The controversy over *Le Livre noir* reached even the chambers of Parliament, not to mention television and radio. If, as originally planned, the preface had been written by François Furet, the historian of the French Revolution and author of a major study of the allure of communism, *Le Passé d'une illusion* (Paris: Robert Laffont/Calmann Lévy, 1995), *Le Livre noir* would likely have ended up on specialists' shelves. But when Furet died suddenly in July 1997, *Le Livre noir*'s editor, Stéphane Courtois, longtime associate of France's premier ex-communist intellectual, Annie Kriegel, and editor of the review *Communisme*, added the missing ingredients of sensation, hyperbole, and denunciation. Timed to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, *Le Livre noir* was an immediate success. But this had little to do with the quality of its scholarship or even the arguments among its six authors. Rather, what made the book a media event was Courtois's introduction, which asserts that because of the attention given to Nazism and the Holocaust, communism has been virtually ignored as the most genocidal political phenomenon of the twentieth century.

Courtois withheld his introduction from his co-authors, so egregiously violating the *senus communis* among the contributors that two of them, Nicolas Werth, the author of the most substantial chapter—a book-length study of terror in the Soviet Union—and Jean-Louis Margolin, the author of the chapter on China, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, broke ranks and publicly disavowed it in several lengthy articles and interviews. The debate that ensued all but ignored the bulk of the volume, focusing largely on Courtois's contribution. At issue was not his comparison of Nazism with communism per se, which has its own intellectual history, begun before World War II by figures like George Orwell and Dwight Macdonald, and best exemplified by Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Nor was it the point, first argued by Arendt, that "the concentration and extermination camps of totalitarian regimes serve[d] as the laboratories in which the fundamental belief of totalitarianism that everything is possible [was] being verified."

Rather, Courtois created a scandal because he blamed the world's "silence" about the crimes of communism on exclusive attention to the Holocaust: "After 1945, the genocide of the Jews has appeared as the paradigm for modern barbarism, so as to occupy all of the space reserved for the mass terror of the twentieth century. The uniqueness of the Holocaust focuses attention on the exceptional atrocity, while impeding perception of other realities of the same order in the communist world." Writing in *Le Monde*, historian Annette Wieviorka condemned Courtois for his "agitprop" attempt to create sufficient "shock-value" to "transform a book which might otherwise have had a different status into a politically managed operation under the guise of 'scholarship.' "

Courtois does not dispute the uniqueness of the Holocaust, though he reduces it to the method of annihilation, "the use of modern technical resources." In all other respects he draws no distinction between the "class totalitarianism" of communism, and the "race totalitarianism" of the Nazis: "the future Nazi society would be built on the 'pure race,' the

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future communist society on the proletarian people freed of all bourgeois dross." In short, communism, like Nazism, "installed mass murder as a veritable system of government." Courtois's criteria for equating the two systems are ultimately not analytic but moral: "The child of a Ukrainian kulak deliberately starved to death by the Stalinist regime is 'worth' no less than a Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto starved to death by the Nazi regime." That statement is irrefutable, but it says nothing about the differences between a state-induced famine designed to subdue an independent peasantry and a state-directed genocide designed to eliminate the possibility of Jewish children now and forever.

THAT DISTINCTION was the substance of the comparison between the Ukrainian famine and the Nazi death camps poignantly drawn by the Soviet writer Vasily Grossman in his novel *Forever Flowing*, which is only partially cited by Courtois. Faced with starving children, the protagonist Ivan Grigoryevich remarks that "that is exactly how the Nazis put the Jewish children into the Nazi gas chambers: 'You are not allowed to live, you are all Jews.'" In the passage omitted by Courtois, however, Grossman's narrator continues: "And it was impossible to understand, grasp, comprehend. For these children were Soviet children and those putting them to death were Soviet people. These children were Russians, and those who were putting them to death were Russians. And the government was a government of workers and peasants. Why this massacre?"

Also at stake in the controversy was Courtois's attempt to render a statistical account of those killed under communism. Courtois admits that the "long history" of communism cannot be reduced to an accounting procedure, nor to periods of terror, repression, and famine. But that is precisely what he does when he lumps together all those whose deaths could be attributed to "the single global system of communism" since 1917, by whatever means, under more than a dozen communist regimes, in an area encompassing many countries and several continents. The balance, he writes, is "100 million dead," a figure that neither squares with those presented by *Le Livre noir* itself nor with its advertising, which proclaims "85 million dead." His computation of twenty million dead for the period of Soviet rule does not jibe with Werth's calculation of about fifteen million, a figure that, as Werth is careful to underline, includes the eleven million who died of hunger, starvation, and disease during the civil war (1921–1922) and the "programmed" famine in the Ukraine (1932–1933), as well as the approximately four million who perished in the mass deportations of kulaks and ethnic minorities, and those who died in the Great Purge (1937–38) and in the Gulag. Courtois claims 150,000 victims of communism in Latin America, though Pascal Fontaine's chapter gives less than a third of that (including those murdered by Peru's Shining Path) as a plausible figure. Writing in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Maurice Lemoine concluded that the discrepancy can only be explained if Courtois counts as communist victims all those killed in the Nicaraguan civil war against the Somoza regime and in the war between the *contras* and the Sandinistas; that is, on all sides of the conflict.

The point, however, is not accuracy, which is admittedly an elusive goal given the fact that no archives are yet available for China, North Korea, Cambodia, or Vietnam, and that those in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have only recently been opened. Nor is Courtois's purpose to elaborate on problems of comparing different communist regimes, which should have been at the center of the introduction to a volume attempting a preliminary accounting of the crimes of communism, but to score points in what amounts to a "double-entry bookkeeping of the horrors." According to Courtois,

> the facts demonstrate irrefutably that the communist regimes killed about one hundred million people, while it was about 25 million [under Nazism]. This simple procedure should at least provoke reflection about the similarities that exist between the Nazi regime, which since 1945 has been regarded as the most criminal regime of the century, and the communist regimes, whose legitimacy at the international level was unassailable until 1991, which remain in power in a num-

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ber of countries, and which still claim followers throughout the entire world.

In short, communist regimes were far more murderous than Nazism and should not be given second rank in the moral ledger of twentieth-century genocide. Sweeping aside all the relevant comparisons between these regimes, during different historical periods, and under distinct circumstances, the question is reduced to what Alain Blum called "the macabre amassing of the dead."

COURTOIS BLAMES what he regards as the "enormous lag" in the public and academic acknowledgment of the crimes of communism on three factors: first, the idea of the revolution itself, the passionate attachment of intellectuals to the symbols of an idealism still being mourned; second, the moral prestige that the Soviet victory over Nazism lent to communism after 1945. Especially in those countries occupied by the Nazis, he notes, the members of the resistance paid such a high price that they were able, after the war, to take on "the role of martyrs in order to sacralize the communist cause and obstruct all criticism of it." The third factor, Courtois claims, is that the "victors of 1945 legitimately placed their crimes—in particular the genocide of the Jews—at the center of their condemnation of the Nazis." Though the communists initially denied the uniqueness of the Holocaust, "they soon recognized the advantage which acknowledgment of that singularity could reap for the perpetual mobilization of antifascism." This assertion is not merely bizarre and myopic. It is historically false.

Leftist antifascism regarded the Nazi regime as yet another variety of generic fascism, which in turn was a cynical instrument of capitalist economic domination. Racial genocide was ultimately incomprehensible to that logic. Consequently, antifascist intellectuals in the West and the East European people's republics, which enshrined antifascism as state doctrine, uniformly suppressed acknowledgment of racism as the central element of what they called "German fascism"—and so rendered the mass extermination of the Jews all but invisible. Even where anti-Semitism was a theme, as in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* (1946), Hitler and the gas chambers were mentioned only in passing, and the role of Vichy in the deportations not at all. The original *Livre noir* of Nazi genocide in the Soviet Union was painstakingly compiled by Ilya Ehrenbourg and Vasily Grossman in order to counter the state-sanctioned obliteration of the genocide. Their project was begun immediately after the war and suppressed during the anti-Semitic, "anti-cosmopolitan" purges of the late 1940s. Soviet authorities even melted down the lead type of the book (it appeared in France in 1995).

Certainly not at Nuremberg, nor in any of the countries of the "victors of 1945"; neither in France, England, nor the United States, was the genocide of the Jews "placed at the center of their condemnation of the Nazis" after the war. Raul Hilberg's pathbreaking *The Destruction of the European Jews* was published in 1961 by a small press after being turned down by several major publishers. Courtois's footnotes betray the fact that Hilberg's book appeared in French just ten years ago.

If anything, the cold war brought the crimes of Stalinism to the attention of the Western public long before there was any significant discussion of the Holocaust. Courtois himself draws on the example of two sensational French libel trials—the first initiated in 1949 by Viktor Kravchenko, whose *I Chose Freedom* (1945) revealed the existence of Soviet concentration camps, the second in 1951, by David Rousset, an anti-Nazi partisan and former Buchenwald inmate, who launched an investigation into the Soviet camps— to demonstrate how relentless was the French pro-communist press in its efforts to discredit and deny the veracity of reports about the Gulag. In fact, and despite those efforts, both trials resulted in legal victories. Afterward, it became more difficult for French intellectuals to pretend that the aura of the resistance could be extended morally and geographically to the Soviet Union. As Tony Judt notes in his *Past Imperfect*, "Rousset's efforts forced *Les Temps modernes* to address the question of Soviet camps for the first time in January 1950 and elicited from Maurice Merleau-Ponty the confession that the facts 'put altogether into ques-

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tion the meaning of the Russian system.' " By contrast, it was not until the 1980s that a debate about French participation in the deportation of the Jews was aired nationally.

Much of Courtois's introduction is concerned with the juridical arguments for charging communism with "crimes against humanity" according to the criteria established at Nuremberg and subsequent trials. In France, the demand for "a Nuremberg trial of communism" has a particular connotation, frequently reiterated by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, to justify not prosecuting French crimes of the Vichy era. *Le Livre noir* appeared just when the decade-long national controversy over responsibility for the deportations of French Jews was reaching its apogee in the trial of Maurice Papon on charges of "complicity in the crime against humanity." In that context, Courtois's argument that for victims of communism "all commemoration and demands for reparation 1were prohibited," while "the international Jewish community took charge of the commemoration of the genocide," is an invidious comparison.

There has indeed been little justice for communist crimes because Asian communism is still in power, the Soviet Union existed until 1991, and most postcommunist regimes have not allowed an open confrontation with the past. In East European countries—Germany and the Czech Republic excepted—a "thick black line" has been drawn through the communist era, creating a de jure or de facto exemption from all legal responsibility for the crimes of the old regimes. The reason underscores yet another salient feature of communist terror: victims and perpetrators were often caught up in a common history and biography and, therefore, a shared complicity.

What gives the entire *Livre noir* controversy its particularly French accent is that Courtois's anger is ultimately directed against French intellectuals, whom he accuses of "cupidity, flabbiness, vanity, and fascination with force and violence." He charges them with an "exceptional blindness" toward communist terror, a fatal inability to distinguish what Kriegel called the "luminous face" of communism, its dream of equality and justice, from its darker, more "sinister face." Indeed, after 1945 most French intellectuals believed they had to chose between antifascism, which depicted communism as patriotic and invoked the memory of the resistance, and antitotalitarianism, which depicted communism as brutally repressive, and rejected that memory as essentially corrupted. The moral triumph of resistance forces created a consensus that afforded the Soviet Union and the Red Army far greater legitimacy and support than elsewhere in Europe. As Furet argued, the victory over "absolute evil" rewarded communism with the mantle of "the good," while the purges, the years of the Hitler-Stalin pact, and the massacres perpetrated by the Red Army were obliterated. *Le Livre noir* is yet another chapter in the intellectual history of French disillusionment with the profoundly one-sided philocommunism of the postwar generation.

Le Livre noir's most important authors, Werth and Margolin, condemned Courtois's failure to provide a "serious and penetrating discussion that demands complex and delicate questions about the comparison between fascism and communism, or about the presence of terrorist potential in Marxist theory itself." Distancing themselves from Courtois's conclusion that one finds on "every page the bloody essence of communism," Werth and Margolin countered that "everywhere communism was in power it was antidemocratic and repressive, but it was not everywhere nor perpetually a slaughter." Werth condemned Courtois's manipulation of the figures, his use of shocking formulations, and his juxtaposition of diverse histories to affirm the identity of communist crimes. But he defended the "reality of the object: '*the communist system.*' " "Does there not exist all in all a common terrain," he asked in an interview in the journal *L'Histoire* (January 1998), "a new ruthlessness, constituted by the practical politics instituted in all the countries that were claimed by communism and which persisted through the great and terrible sequences of repression, indeed, which at certain moments were enormously criminal?"

Werth's question highlights the real tragedy of *Le Livre noir*—that Courtois's introduction all but foreclosed the opportunity for a serious discussion of its contents. Though the

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book offers little that is not already known, Werth's 250-page contribution is a serious preliminary synthesis of the new (largely American and Russian) research based on the Soviet archives. Werth carefully documents how the new regime began to apply terror as a political instrument as early as 1917 in confrontations with armed Russian peasants who defied requisitions and conscription; how its use was amplified during the campaigns against the Cossacks, kulaks, and ethnic minorities during the 1920s; and how it reached a crescendo after 1928 in the Stalinist terror against an already pacified society. He draws subtle distinctions between the early campaigns and the Great Terror of 1937–1938, demonstrating that the mechanisms of communist repression were diverse, encompassed a wide range of political, social, and ethnic victims, and oscillated between relatively quiescent periods and periods of "intensely spiraling terror" driven by zealousness at its base and manipulation from above. His modestly argued contribution is a scholarly accomplishment, "betrayed," as one commentator put it, by his own editor.

THE UPROAR over *Le Livre noir* also caused a mini-crisis in French governing circles. By underscoring the "sinister side" of communism and putting it on a par with the Holocaust, Courtois attacked a fundamental premise of contemporary French politics: that today's communists are historically the heirs of Enlightenment ideals of justice and the patriotic antifascist resistance. Since Lionel Jospin's ruling Socialist government currently includes three Communist ministers, *Le Livre noir* prompted members of the anti-Gaullist center-right confederation, the UDF, to confront the prime minister in Parliament and demand "that he identify those responsible for supporting this horror." Jospin affirmed his "total condemnation of the Gulag" while declaring that he was "proud" of his coalition partners. He reminded the Parliament that in 1945 French Communists were included in the Resistance government led by General De Gaulle, and that the French Communist Party (PCF) "if somewhat belatedly," had "drawn the lessons from its history." The UDF demonstrably walked out while Jacques Chirac's Gaullists stood firmly behind their wartime allies.

The Socialists argued that by applauding Courtois's conclusions, the UDF was opening the door "in the long run, to an alliance with the extreme right." In France the question of a tactical alliance between conservatives and the National Front is no academic matter. If communists and Nazis were equally genocidal, then why should Communists be included in a government, and not neofascists like Jean-Marie Le Pen and his heir apparent Bruno Mégret? It did not take long for the National Front to include *Le Livre noir* on its essential reading list, advertising the book with the slogan: "We are awaiting an act of repentance from the French Communists." On March 20, which the Socialists called "a dark day for the Republic," the National Front showed its muscle by electing five UDF regional council presidents, deeply dividing the conservative-right between local leaders who welcomed the new alliance and UDF president François Léotard, who declared the pact unacceptable and suspended the five new presidents.

Predictably, the French Communist Party, which has only haltingly confronted its pro-Soviet past, reacted defensively to the book's publication. French Communists were among the last to acknowledge that they had followed Moscow's mandates throughout the Stalinist and post-Stalinist era. Robert Hue, PCF leader since Georges Marchais stepped down in 1994, condemned Courtois "for playing the game of the extreme right," and evoked the memory of communist participation in the resistance, in the Popular Front, and in the anticolonial movements. But Hue also conceded that the party would have to confront "a certain number of errors" in its own Stalinist history. Last year, the PCF took the unprecedented step of "condemning without reservation" the expulsion of some of its most prominent militants during the cold war. After *Le Livre noir* appeared, Claude Cabane, editor of the party daily, *L'Humanité*, went so far as to cite Primo Levi's remark that "one cannot think of Nazism without the gas chambers, nor of communism without the camps."

As Bernard Henri-Levy pointed out, few

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of the protagonists in the controversy over *Le Livre noir* would deny that there are similarities between Auschwitz and the Gulag, or between the ideological components of totalitarian terror. Rather, the essential point is that the Holocaust is not reducible to the sum of its victims or to the method of their annihilation. Nazism's premise was a metaphysical commitment of the regime to the complete disappearance of the Jews, while Stalinist terror, even when its effects were genocidal, as in the Ukraine during 1932–1933, did not intend to exterminate all Ukranians but to enforce compliance through mass murder. Even the Khmer Rouge genocide was carried out in the interest of maintaining political control, its victims selected according to arbitrary political criteria applied to highly disparate social and ethnic groups. These genocides were not "lesser" crimes than the Nazi genocide, but they are different crimes, requiring an approach that scrupulously avoids conflating the moral and the analytical, the juridical and the historical.

As FURET pointed out in a posthumously published exchange of letters with the German political scientist Ernst Nolte (whose remarks on the Holocaust provoked the "Historians' Controversy" over a decade ago [see Anson Rabinbach, "German Historians Debate the Nazi Past," *Dissent*, Spring 1988]) the fact that "the annihilation of the Jews has acceded to the pinnacle of crimes that have been committed in the name of political ideologies" does not excuse the massacres of the kulaks during the 1930s, the mass murder of the Polish elite in Katyn, the horrors of the Great Leap Forward, or the Cambodian genocide. What distinguishes the Jewish Holocaust from those other incarnations of evil, Furet continued, was that "the liquidation of the Jews aimed at men, women, and children, solely on the basis of the fact that they were born Jews, which was entirely independent of any conceivable calculation that might have ensued from a struggle over power. The antisemitic terror ultimately lost all connection to the political realm from which it originated."

At one level, however, Courtois is right that communism and Nazism have never been treated equally. Before World War II only a tiny minority on the left, like Dwight Macdonald, counseled neutrality rather than support an alliance with the Stalinist variant of totalitarianism against Hitler. Because the full extent of Stalin's crimes was as yet unknown, the choice between Hitler and Stalin in 1941 was not at all ambiguous. Once the fruits of appeasing Hitler were apparent—and not just to the left—Western diplomats, politicians, and the "man on the street" (in 1939, 83 percent of the American public favored a Soviet victory over Germany if a war were to occur) understood that what would soon be called the "Soviet menace" was fundamentally different from the "German menace," and that the threat to civilization required embracing the lesser evil.

Courtois is also right that any "economy of remembrance" that establishes a hierarchy of Nazi genocide above Stalin's terror or Pol Pot's killing fields is unjust to the victims of communism. Unlike history, memory is always consecrated by those whose aim is to recognize the victims of a particular suffering. If postcommunist governments have shown little interest in commemorating past crimes, the deficit cannot be blamed on a preoccupation with the Jewish genocide, but is perhaps symptomatic of the fact, as was also the case after World War II, that the generation of perpetrators and victims is less inclined to remembrance than their children. Comparisons are not only necessary, they are fundamental to historical comprehension and criticism. But they also require prudent and subtle distinctions. Ironically, *Le Livre noir* would have done greater justice to the memory of the victims of communism if it had appeared without Courtois's clumsy attempt at leveling the horrors. ●

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Reclaiming the Wasteland

Thinking About Land Mines and Their Eradication

Jeffrey C. Isaac

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water . . .
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"

Antipersonnel land mines epitomize the vulnerability and risk experienced by many inhabitants of the late modern world. The product of extraordinary scientific ingenuity and scrupulousness, conceived as an inexpensive and efficient means of controlling territory and constricting the movement of military forces, these agents of destruction are deeply embedded in the geopolitical terrain. And this embdeddedness is only partly metaphorical; for land mines are literally implanted in the soil throughout the planet. Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Somalia. . . as Philip C. Winslow makes clear in his superb *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Land Mines and the Global Legacy of War,* land mines pervade our world, turning large parts of the globe into heaps of broken images, and engendering a fear in a handful of dust that Eliot could not have dreamed of.

The issue of land mines has been thrust into the political limelight by the recent Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, signed by 121 nations in Ottawa in December 1997, and by the awarding of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBLM) and to its coordinator, Jody Williams. If land mines have long struck fear into the hearts of soldiers and civilians throughout many parts of the world, until recently they were a relatively obscure political issue.

Yet the politicization of this issue is a significant development with important implications for democratic politics. Although the land-mines issue is consistent with more conventionally defined "left" political struggles over labor rights, multinational corporate power, imperialism, militarism, and even environmentalism, in many ways it lies at a diagonal to such struggles, as a "humanitarian" or human-rights issue that transcends class and whose remedies fall short of the kinds of institutional transformations typically envisioned on the left. Yet it is precisely for this reason that it is so important, for it opens up new ways of contesting violence and human suffering and organizing politically across borders.

According to most reports, there are over a hundred million antipersonnel land mines buried worldwide. An antipersonnel land mine, unlike an antivehicle mine, is designed to explode when stepped upon by a human being. Over 26,000 people are killed every year from antipersonnel-landmine explosions. Every twenty minutes somebody is shredded by a mine. The vast majority of these victims are civilians, many of them children, who are simply foraging for food or playing in a field or walking from one place to another. Antipersonnel land mines are indiscriminate and virtually impossible to detect. Once implanted in an area they remain indefinitely, an explosion waiting to happen, which accounts for their facetious nickname—the "permanent sentry."

Nobody knows exactly how many land

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mines there are, and nobody knows exactly where they are located. The military appeal of these weapons derives precisely from how cheaply they can be produced and distributed and how easily they can be implanted (it takes a hundred times longer to remove a land mine than to deploy one). While they are considered part of "conventional" military strategy—notably by the United States in the demilitarized zone separating South and North Korea—they play an even more important role in civil wars, from Cambodia to Somalia to Afghanistan to Bosnia, where military regimes, paramilitary forces, and guerrilla movements use them to hold conquered territory, to defend against enemy incursion, and simply to contain resident populations. Winslow's *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth* presents a vivid account of the use of these weapons by the Soviet-backed Marxist government and the U.S.-backed UNITA insurgency during the Angolan civil war. The Lusaka accords of 1994 brought an official end to the state of war, and yet, as Winslow demonstrates, Angola is a society held hostage to land mines and to the irresponsible way in which these mines were implanted, along extended stretches of roads and around entire villages and cities. Similar stories could be told about other, similar civil wars, in Africa, Asia, Central America and—let us not forget Bosnia—in Europe itself.

These weapons create a permanent climate of fear and mistrust, endangering civilians and prolonging civil war. And, perhaps most ominously, they make humanitarian assistance and postwar reconstruction extraordinarily difficult, so that farming and even simple travel are almost impossible in large portions of many countries. Indeed, it was the danger that antipersonnel land mines posed to international humanitarian relief workers and international "peacekeeping forces" that first brought the issue to the attention of advanced industrial societies.

It was as a response to these problems that the Land Mine Treaty was drafted. The treaty draws upon a series of legal precedents invoked in its preamble. Its main provisions involve a commitment on the part of signatories to a complete ban on the production, use, and export of antipersonnel land mines, the destruction of existing stockpiles within ten years, and international cooperation in promoting land-mine clearance, mine-awareness programs in countries plagued by mines, and the care and rehabilitation of land-mine victims. Although the treaty also enumerates conditions under which time extensions can be sought, it categorically repudiates antipersonnel land-mines and calls for their total elimination.

The treaty goes into effect six months after forty of its signatories have ratified it, something that has not yet taken place. But its 121 signatories, which include such nations as Canada, Austria, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany, as well as South Africa, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Angola, constitute widespread diplomatic support. The current controversy regarding the treaty surrounds the Clinton administration's opposition to its categorical language. The administration has announced its general opposition to the use of antipersonnel land mines but has also claimed, following a long-standing Pentagon strategy, that such weapons, which currently litter the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea, are necessary to protect the 37,000 American troops currently stationed there in the event of a North Korean incursion into South Korea. A few other nations have opposed the treaty, notably China, India, Pakistan, Iraq, and Israel. Much of the media discussion has centered on whether and how nonsignatory nations, especially the United States, can be brought along to subscribe to the treaty's principles.

BUT EVEN more attention has focused on the astonishing success of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines in bringing this issue to the fore and in pressing, within a few short years, for the drafting and adoption of the treaty. The ICBLM is a coalition of over one thousand nongovernmental citizen organizations in more than sixty countries. It was formed in 1992 by six groups—Vietnam Veterans of America, Medico International of Germany, the Mines Advisory Group of Britain, Handicap International of France, and the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights—

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and quickly attracted the support of hundreds of affiliates, most located in the third world. The group's success has been widely attributed to its savvy use of Internet technologies, which allowed its activists to quickly and inexpensively communicate across the globe, stimulating the emergence of new affiliates and the establishment of connections between them. The campaign worked on two fronts, publicizing ICBLM's purpose (assisted by Diana, Princess of Wales, and other celebrity supporters) and coordinating a targeted campaign of citizen diplomacy. It lobbied public officials; contacted supportive diplomats such as Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy, former U.N. General Secretary Boutros-Boutros Ghali, and former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance; and garnered the support of the Vatican Council, Pope John Paul II, the Islamic Conference, the European Parliament, the Africa, Caribbean, Pacific–European Union Joint Assembly, UNICEF, and the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. The campaign was particularly effective in mobilizing expert knowledge to influence public and, especially, elite opinion about the devastating effects of land mines, producing and disseminating a series of reports, including "The Coward's War: Land Mines in Cambodia," "Mines: A Perverse Use of Technology," "Hidden Enemies: Land Mines in Northern Somalia," "Land Mines in Angola," "After the Guns Fall Silent: The Enduring Legacy of Land Mines," and UNICEF's important "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children." As a consequence of these activities, the campaign was in a position to do what few nongovernmental organizations can do—to work as a diplomatic agent in its own right, and to participate as an equal member, along with diplomatic officials of nation-states, in the drafting of the treaty.

The significance of the ICBLM's strategic success has not been lost on its supporters. U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), sponsor of a Senate ban on the export of American land mines, has held that "this extraordinary coalition of organizations representing civil society on every continent was instrumental in first putting the spotlight on the land-mine problem and spurring governments to act." Jody Williams, ICBLM's coordinator, has stated that "It is historic. It proves that civil society and governments do not have to see themselves as adversaries. It demonstrates that small and middle powers can work together with civil society and address humanitarian concerns with breathtaking speed. It shows that such a partnership is a new kind of 'superpower' in the post–cold war world."

Williams puts her finger on some of the distinctive features of the campaign. It is nonideological, pursuing humanitarian goals—the minimization of civilian casualties, the cessation of civil conflict, and the promotion of basic human security—and seeking basic remedial action—the elimination of antipersonnel land mines—rather than a fundamental redistribution of political power. It is adamantly nonpartisan, and it treats governments as potential partners rather than as adversaries. It practices a new kind of diplomacy, involving citizens and nongovernmental organizations, transcending the boundaries of national sovereignty, and establishing new cosmopolitan links and political identities.

IN THIS regard it exemplifies the novel forms of activism analyzed by Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink in their *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Keck and Sikkink claim that these networks are becoming increasingly important in the post–cold war world, as means of addressing global issues and as vehicles for participatory citizenship. They argue that such networks typically operate at four levels: *information politics*—the ability to quickly and credibly generate strategically relevant information; *symbolic politics*—the ability to generate persuasive symbols and narratives for geographically remote audiences; *leverage politics*—the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation in which weaker and more vulnerable actors are unlikely to have influence; and *accountability politics*—the attempt to hold powerful actors to their avowed policies and principles. What is notable is that such networks typically do not work at the level of political parties and state power, nor do they seek to occupy governmental authority. Equally notable, while such networks combine grassroots activism and elite forms of knowl-

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edge and activity, they do not aspire to be mass movements as these have been conventionally understood.

In a Summer 1994 *Dissent* piece Paul Wapner highlighted the growing importance of such networks in connection with global environmentalism ("Environmental Activism and Global Civil Society"). Such campaigns have also assumed importance in connection with labor rights—as witness the global campaign against Nike's third world labor practices—women's rights, prisoners of conscience, rights of indigenous peoples, and other forms of human-rights struggle. These campaigns have a generally democratic orientation, and they challenge diverse forms of oppression. They work together from time to time—as witness the role of Human Rights Watch in the formation of the ICBLM—but they do not add up to a single program of radical transformation. If they share a common objective, it is the general ethos enunciated by Albert Camus: a refusal to be executioner or victim, and a corresponding commitment to "an obvious complicity among men, a common texture, the solidarity of chains, a communication between human being and human being which makes men both similar and united."

An important aspect of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines is the way it has pioneered this new kind of activism and demonstrated its potential as a way to effect change on a global scale. But just as significant are the values it promotes.

The first is the value of peace itself. The campaign is a kind of peace movement, in that it supports the eradication of a particularly lethal weapon. As Jody Williams has put it: "Land mines distinguish themselves because once they have been sown, once the soldier walks away from the weapon, the land mine cannot tell the difference between a soldier and a civilian—a woman, a child, a grandmother going out to collect firewood to make the family meal. The crux of the problem is that while the use of the weapon may be militarily justifiable during the day of the battle, or even the two weeks of the battle, or maybe even the two months of the battle, once peace is declared the land mine does not recognize that peace. The land mine is eternally prepared to take victims." As Williams's comment indicates, the campaign is antimilitarist, but not necessarily pacifist. The objection to land mines is that they are indiscriminate in both time and target. Land mines not only permanently endanger noncombatants, they also perpetuate the cycle of mistrust and violence.

Furthermore, it is not simply their ethical but their practical utility that is being called into question. While a number of nations, notably the United States, have maintained that antipersonnel land mines are a necessary means of conventional defense, the ICBLM has refuted this claim by mobilizing the opposition of military leaders to these weapons. The most famous instance of this opposition was an April 1996 open letter to President Clinton signed by fourteen three- and four-star generals and an admiral, published in the *New York Times*, repudiating land mines as a weapon of war. Such military experts have argued that land mines endanger one's own troops as much as one's enemies, and that they serve no purpose that could not be served through other means. As the open letter stated: "Given the wide range of weaponry available to military forces today, antipersonnel land mines are not essential. Thus, banning them would not undermine the effectiveness or safety of our forces." A growing consensus is emerging that antipersonnel land mines have no other purpose than to terrorize populations and to kill indiscriminately. The repudiation of such weapons is thus as thoroughly consistent with just-war theory as it is with more antimilitarist or pacifist orientations.

The second value implicit in the campaign is a healthy suspicion of technology and an insistence on the importance of natural and human ecology. Land mines can be seen as a particularly lethal kind of garbage littering the earth. Humankind currently confronts a number of crises of disposal of hazardous materials—plutonium, uranium, PCBs, numerous other forms of hazardous waste, and simple, ordinary refuse. Most of these materials are the byproducts of processes purportedly producing some other useful object. All of them pollute the environment and endanger the

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health of humans and other species. Land mines are obviously a more directly hazardous product. Indeed, unlike these other materials, land mines are not waste; they are the "useful" product itself. But the only use-value of these products is death, destruction, and the despoiling of vast tracts of land rendered uninhabitable and uncultivable. The opposition to land mines can be viewed as a refusal of the environmentally irresponsible use of technology, and an insistence on a more ecologically sensitive way of organizing human affairs. It can also be viewed as an insistence on the importance of transnational corporate responsibility. Land mines, like other forms of weaponry, but also like infant formula and cigarettes, are a global commodity whose export does damage to the health and welfare of millions in those countries who are the "beneficiaries" of such exports. The campaign against land mines is thus part of the broader movement to insist upon more-accountable and responsible forms of global commerce.

Finally, the campaign supports the values of sustainable economic development and democracy. One of the principal causes of poverty and degradation in the third world is brutal civil war. Although it is possible to seek deeper, underlying causes of such warfare, the simple fact remains that as long as such conflicts persist millions of people are consigned to lives that are solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. The use of land mines perpetuates such wars and stands in the way of postwar reconstruction of social and economic life. What Peter Simpkin, former director of the UN's Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit, said about Angola is true in many other places as well: "Angolans have no rights whatsoever. Until there is free circulation of people, we'll have a state of sub-subsistence economy with severe shortages, no market, high inflation fueled by shortages of products, and a rapid deterioration of the infrastructure." Such conditions reproduce widespread existing socioeconomic inequalities. And the casualties caused by land mines further exacerbate these inequalities, causing profound hardship and taxing the medical and financial resources of families and communities, most of them already suffering from grinding poverty. As Jerry White of the Land Mine Survivors' Group put it: "Let's look at the injured and land-mine survivors not just as those who step on a land mine and perhaps have an amputated limb, but as the families and communities that are held hostage to land mines." The campaign against land mines is thus implicitly a struggle for social and economic justice, for as long as these mines exist, anything remotely resembling justice or democracy can be little more than a distant dream for millions.

The campaign to end land mines is thus an exemplary rebellion against a pervasive and elusive source of worldwide suffering and injustice. It embodies cosmopolitan values of universal dignity and respect for human life, and a global ethos of solidarity that transcends the boundaries of nation-states. It joins human-rights activists North and South in an effort to promote peace and justice. And it has achieved remarkable success in attracting public attention and in effecting diplomatic change.

And yet it is important to be realistic about these achievements. Many of the Land Mine Treaty signatory governments are unstable and authoritarian regimes whose willingness to disavow land mines does not necessarily translate into a willingness to discontinue their use. Furthermore, the treaty, like most such treaties, is only an agreement among duly constituted nation-states; it does not include the many paramilitary and guerrilla forces whose use of land mines contributes so much to their proliferation. Thomas Hobbes long ago observed that covenants are but words unless backed up by the means of enforcement. It is not clear that the treaty establishes any such means. Jody Williams has acknowledged as much. "The treaty was an outstanding achievement, but until that treaty becomes international law, until the countries sign it and destroy their stockpiles, it is just beautiful words on paper."

Furthermore, given the complex causes of violence—class inequality, global flows of capital and labor, political authoritarianism, the widespread availability of so many means of destruction, the sheer momentum of conflict itself—it is hard to believe that the twenty-two

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articles of the Land Mine Treaty can do much even to halt the use of land mines much less to promote peace, reconstruction, or care for landmine victims. And in any case, the elimination of antipersonnel land mines is a daunting task. A 1994 UN report estimated that if such mines were immediately banned and all nations committed themselves to their eradication, it would cost over $33 billion and take over one *thousand* years to remove all existing mines.

If land mines can be taken as symbols of the productivity and destructiveness of modern technology, they can also be taken as symbols of the asymmetry of problem and remedy that seems to confront us today. Marx once insisted that mankind only sets for itself problems that it can solve. But the literal wasteland created by land mines, and the figurative wasteland that land mines symbolize, attest to the difficulty of solution, and to the pervasiveness of our vulnerability. This is no reason to give up. The clearing of some land mines is better than the clearing of none. The rehabilitation of some mine victims is better than the rehabilitation of none. The reconstruction of some war-torn and mine-infested regions is better than the reconstruction of none. The Campaign to Ban Land Mines is a noble effort that is worthy of the support of all conscientious citizens of the world. And similar campaigns and global networks, on behalf of child laborers or women's rights, represent an important new form of politics in an era of globalization. But there is something Sisyphean about such efforts, given the magnitude and embeddedness of the problems against which they set themselves. Like Sisyphus, we will never rid our world of its burdens. Yet like Sisyphus we can also see, as Camus wrote, that "all is not . . . exhausted." Such a politics of reclamation is a far cry from the struggle for justice and equality that has long animated the left. Its goals are more modest, and its successes are likely to be tentative, fragile, and frustrating. Yet the world being what it is, such a politics should not be taken lightly. ●

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American Multiculturalism in the International Arena

Will Kymlicka

LIKE CITIZENS in many other countries, Americans are debating issues of multiculturalism. But the debate in the United States has a special importance because of the profound influence of American ideas around the world. Unfortunately, this influence has not been entirely propitious. It has been beneficial in some cases, but unhelpful in others, serving to exacerbate rather than remedy important injustices. I'll try to explain why this is so, and how the danger can be minimized.

American Multiculturalism

A wide range of views has been expressed in the American debates about multiculturalism, but I think we can see an emerging consensus, or at least a dominant paradigm, centered on the following three claims:

(a) that some or other form of multiculturalism is now unavoidable ("We are all multiculturalists now," as Nathan Glazer puts it), and that the interesting debate is not whether to adopt multiculturalism, but rather what kind of multiculturalism to adopt;

(b) that the appropriate form of multiculturalism must be fluid in its conception of groups and group boundaries (new groups may emerge, older groups may coalesce or disappear); voluntary in its conception of group affiliation (individuals should be free to decide whether and how to affiliate with their community of descent); and nonexclusive in its conception of group identity (being a member of one group does not preclude identification with another, or with the larger American nation). Only such an open-ended, fluid, and voluntary conception of multiculturalism fits with the openness of American society and its deep respect for individual choice; and

(c) that the greatest challenge to creating such a fluid conception of multiculturalism remains the disadvantaged and stigmatized status of African Americans. Being "black" is an ascribed identity that is difficult for most African Americans to escape or renounce. The child of a Greek-Arab mixed marriage can choose whether to think of herself as a Greek-American or Arab-American or both or neither; the child of a Greek–African-American mixed marriage will be seen by others as "black," whether or not that is how she wants to be seen. Moreover, the result of this ascribed identity is a greater degree of social exclusion and segregation than for other ethnic groups: blacks are more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods, attend segregated schools, and so on. The main challenge for American multiculturalism, therefore, is to reduce the ascriptive, stigmatizing, and segregating elements of "black" identity, so that being black can come to resemble other ethnic identities in America.

I ACCEPT THESE three claims. However, I worry about the way in which they have been defended. Too often, this open, fluid, and voluntary conception of American multiculturalism has been explained and defended *in contrast to minority nationalism*. That is, when American authors explain what a closed, static, and involuntary conception of multiculturalism would look like, they typically point to cases of minority nationalism, whether in Quebec or Flanders, Yugoslavia or Sri Lanka. This contrast confuses, rather than clarifies, debates about multiculturalism in America. More important, it is having a pernicious influence in other countries, inhibiting efforts to understand and accommodate minority nationalisms.

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Postethnic America

Consider the recent work of David Hollinger, whose *Postethnic America* is the most sophisticated defense of the consensus view.[1] Hollinger distinguishes two kinds of multiculturalism: a "pluralist" model, which treats groups as permanent and enduring, and as the subject of group rights; and a "cosmopolitan" model, which accepts shifting group boundaries, multiple affiliations, and hybrid identities, and which is based on individual rights. As he puts it: "Pluralism respects inherited boundaries and locates individuals within one or another of a series of ethno-racial groups to be protected or preserved. Cosmopolitanism is more wary of traditional enclosures and favors voluntary affiliations. Cosmopolitanism promotes multiple identities, emphasizes the dynamic and changing character of many groups, and is responsive to the potential for creating new cultural combinations."

Hollinger strongly defends the latter cosmopolitan form—"according to which individuals decide how tightly or loosely they wish to affiliate with one or more communities of descent"—while criticizing the former. He argues that this cosmopolitan model has worked well for white European immigrants to America in the past, and that it continues to work well for more recent immigrants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia. He recognizes that it will be more difficult to bring African Americans (the descendants of the slaves, as distinct from new African or Caribbean immigrants) under this "postethnic" umbrella. However, he insists that this sort of inclusion is what most blacks want and what justice requires, and that it remains an achievable goal, although certain special measures may be required (for example, more-targeted forms of affirmative action).

I am sympathetic to Hollinger's view about the appropriate form of multiculturalism in America. And I think it can work for immigrant groups in many other countries as well. Indeed, the official "multiculturalism policy" adopted by the federal government in Canada in 1971 is largely inspired by this conception of how immigrant ethnicity should be handled. Some critics of this policy have argued that it falls into Hollinger's "pluralist" category, treating immigrant groups as fixed and self-contained entities. However, on inspection, it is clear that the multiculturalism policy in Canada, both in its intentions and consequences, is much closer to Hollinger's "cosmopolitan" version. It explicitly treats immigrant ethnocultural affiliation as voluntary and encourages the members of different immigrant groups to interact, to share their cultural heritage, and to participate in common educational, economic, political, and legal institutions. The long-term result of this approach has been a significant increase over the last thirty years in rates of interethnic friendships and marriages—higher than in the United States—and to the proliferation of shifting, multiple, and hybridic identities.

LIKE HOLLINGER, I think that the integration of immigrants into this fluid multiculturalism is desirable—and quite a success story. And, like Hollinger, I think that this process can work not only for the older white immigrants from Europe, but also for more recent Arab, Asian, and Caribbean immigrants to the United States and Canada. I have defended this model of immigrant integration both in Canada (where it is already fairly strongly entrenched) and in Europe (where it is still strongly resisted). In this regard, Hollinger's account of a postethnic America is a good model; countries like Austria or Belgium could learn a great deal from it about the successful integration of immigrants.

My worry, however, is about the applicability of this model to nonimmigrant groups, and in particular to groups that have been conquered or colonized, like the Québecois or indigenous peoples in Canada. These "nations within" were originally self-governing, and like other conquered or colonized peoples around the world, have consistently fought to gain (or rather regain) their autonomy, so as to maintain themselves as separate and self-governing societies. They call themselves "nations" and assert their national rights. And indeed both the indigenous peoples and the *Quebecois* do have substantial autonomy within Canada: the former through the system of self-

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governing Indian bands; the latter through the system of federalism.

Hollinger never explicitly addresses the question of the rights of colonized or conquered peoples within liberal democracies or the legitimacy of the forms of minority nationalism adopted by such groups. But it is clear that he does not support minority nationalism, which he equates with the "pluralist" conception of multiculturalism. For example, he says that his model rejects "the notion of legally protected territorial enclaves for nationality groups"; and that pluralism differs from cosmopolitanism "in the degree to which it endows with privilege particular groups, especially the communities that are well-established at whatever time the ideal of pluralism is invoked." These passages implicitly reject the essence of minority nationalism in Canada or elsewhere. After all, the Quebecois and indigenous peoples in Canada claim legally recognized rights of self-government over their traditional territories, and the justification for these claims is precisely that these societies were "well-established" prior to British dominion. Hollinger's theory seems to rule such nationalist claims out of court.

Hollinger's critique is explicit as well: he describes Quebecois nationalism as the extreme form of "pluralist" multiculturalism, since it treats the Quebecois as a permanent and enduring group and as the bearer of group rights. Indeed, he says it is a form of "ethnic nationalism" whose claims to self-determination are logically equivalent to racial segregation in the United States.

I think this argument reflects a common misunderstanding of the nature of minority nationalism. To see this, it is helpful to examine how minority nationalisms have been dealt with historically in Western democracies, including the United States.

Accommodating Minority Nationalism

Many Western democracies contain national minorities: Belgium (the Flemish), Britain (the Scots and Welsh), Switzerland (the French and Italians), Spain (the Catalans and Basques), and the Scandinavian countries (the indigenous Sami people). In most cases, these minorities were involuntarily incorporated into a larger state, as a result of colonization, conquest, or the ceding of territory from one imperial power to another.

However they were incorporated, these national minorities have typically sought to gain or regain their self-governing powers so as to maintain themselves as separate and distinct societies alongside the majority. They seek control over the language and curriculum of schooling in their region of the country, the language of government employment, and the drawing of internal boundaries. They typically mobilize along nationalist lines, using the ideology of "nationhood" to describe and justify these demands for self-government. At the extreme, they may seek secession, but most of these national minorities have aimed instead for some form of regional autonomy.

How have Western democracies responded to such minority nationalisms? Historically, they have tried to suppress them, often ruthlessly. At various points in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, France banned the use of the Basque and Breton languages in schools or publications and banned any political associations that aimed to promote minority nationalism; Britain tried to suppress the use of Welsh; Canada stripped the Quebecois of their French-language rights and institutions and redrew political boundaries so that the Quebecois did not form a majority in any province; Canada also made it illegal for Aboriginals to form political associations to promote their national claims.

These measures were intended to disempower national minorities and to eliminate any sense of a distinct national identity. Minorities that view themselves as distinct nations, it was said, would be disloyal and potentially secessionist.

However, attitudes toward minority nationalism have changed dramatically in this century. For one thing, pressuring national minorities to integrate into the dominant national group has simply not worked. Western states badly misjudged the durability of minority identities. Heroes, myths, and even traditional customs can change quickly, but the identity itself—the sense of being a distinct nation, with its own culture—is much more stable. States have, at times, used all the tools at their

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disposal to destroy this sense of separate identity, from the prohibition of tribal customs to the banning of minority-language schools. But despite centuries of legal discrimination, national minorities have maintained their distinctiveness and their desire for autonomy.

When a state attacks a minority's sense of nationhood, the result is often to promote rather than reduce the threat of disloyalty and secession. Recent surveys of ethnonationalist conflict around the world show that self-government diminishes the likelihood of violent conflict, while refusing or rescinding political rights is likely to escalate the level of conflict. In the experience of Western democracies, the best way to ensure the loyalty of national minorities has been to move from attack to accommodation.

We can see this shift in most Western democracies that contain national minorities. For example, Canada has adopted a federal system that gives the Quebecois significant language rights and regional autonomy; both Canada and the Scandinavian countries accord self-government rights to indigenous peoples; and Belgium, Spain, and Britain have also moved recently toward giving regional autonomy to their national minorities. In all these countries, the goal of eliminating minority national identities has been abandoned, and it is now accepted that these groups will continue into the indefinite future to see themselves as separate and self-governing nations within the larger state.

In short, an increasing number of Western democracies are multination-states, rather than nation-states. They accept that they contain two or more nations within their borders, and recognize that each constituent nation has a valid claim to the language rights and self-government powers necessary to maintain itself as a distinct culture. And this multinational character is often explicitly affirmed in the country's constitution.

Several multination-states have also recognized that these national rights are best protected through some form of federalism, since federalism allows the creation of regional political units, controlled by the national minority, with substantial (and constitutionally protected) powers of self-government. What we see emerging within several Western democracies is a new form of "multinational federalism"—that is, a model of the state as a federation of regionally concentrated peoples or nations, in which boundaries have been drawn and powers distributed.

These multination federations are, by any reasonable criteria, successful. They have not only managed the conflicts arising from their competing national identities in a peaceful and democratic way, but have also secured a high degree of economic prosperity and individual freedom for their citizens. This is remarkable when one considers the immense power of nationalism in this century. Nationalism has torn apart colonial empires and communist dictatorships and redefined boundaries all over the world. Yet democratic multination federations have succeeded in domesticating and pacifying nationalism while respecting individual rights and freedoms. It is difficult to imagine any other political system that can make the same claim.

Minority Nationalism in the United States

Hollinger's critique of minority nationalism is out of step with the practice of other democracies. Nor does it reflect the American experience with minority nationalism. The U.S. includes several colonized groups that think of themselves as "nations within": for example, Puerto Ricans, the Chamoros of Guam, and the American Indians. These are the paradigm cases of minority nationalism within the United States. (I do not include African Americans, the descendants of slaves brought to America, as a national minority. Hollinger argues, and I agree, that most blacks in the United States have never thought of themselves as a separate nation, but rather have fought for integration into the larger American nation.)

In dealing with its "nations within," the U.S. government has followed the same pattern we have seen in other Western democracies. In the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, efforts were made to suppress these minority nationalisms. For example, when the United States conquered Puerto Rico, it tried to replace Spanish-language with English-language schools and made it illegal to join political parties promoting independence. Similarly, Indian tribes endured a long series of policies (for ex-

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ample, the Dawes Act) aimed at undermining their traditional institutions and at opening Indian lands for colonizing settlers.

Today, however, these national minorities are treated in effect as "nations." Political units have been created in such a way as to enable them to form a local majority, and to exercise substantial rights of self-government on a territorial basis. They all possess a distinct political status (for example, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; the dependent nation status of Indians) not exercised by, or offered to, other territories or subunits of the United States.

Hollinger says little about these cases of minority nationalism in the United States. This is understandable, since they are relatively peripheral, both geographically and numerically, in the American context. Yet they are important theoretically, because they represent the clearest cases where the United States has confronted minority nationalism. And with respect to these groups, the United States is indeed a multination state, a federation of distinct nations. The United States treats these groups as permanent and enduring—and as the subject of group rights.

Postethnic Multiculturalism and Minority Nationalism

This raises a puzzle. If Hollinger is right that minority nationalisms are "ethnic nationalisms" based on the primacy of blood and descent, why have liberal democracies accommodated them? The short answer is that Hollinger has misinterpreted the nature of these nationalist movements.

Consider Quebec. Quebec accepts immigrants from all over the world: it has roughly the same per capita rate of immigration as the United States. Control over immigration is one of the powers Quebec nationalists have sought and gained, and the province administers its own immigration program, actively recruiting immigrants, most of whom are nonwhite. These immigrants are not only granted citizenship under relatively easy terms, but are encouraged by Quebec's own "interculturalism" policy to interact with the members of other ethnic groups, to share their cultural heritage, and to participate in common public institutions.

The result is just the sort of fluid hybridic multiculturalism within Quebec that Hollinger endorses. (Indeed, the level of acceptance of interracial marriage is considerably higher in Quebec than in the United States.) Far from trying to preserve some sort of racial purity, Quebec nationalists are actively seeking people of other races, cultures, and faiths to join them, integrate with them, intermarry with them, and jointly help build a modern, pluralist, distinct (French-speaking) society in Quebec.

Quebec is not unique in this. Catalan and Scottish nationalisms are also postethnic in Hollinger's sense. To be sure, not all minority nationalisms are postethnic: Basque nationalism is largely based on race, and Flemish nationalism has a strong racialist component, as do some indigenous nationalisms. But the extent to which a particular form of minority nationalism is racial or postethnic can only be determined by examining the facts, not by conceptual fiat. And the clear trend throughout most Western democracies is toward a more open and nonracial definition of minority nationalism. In the case of Quebec, for example, the overwhelming majority of Quebecers forty years ago believed that to be a true Quebecois one had to be descended from the original French settlers; today, fewer than 20 percent accept this view.

Hollinger's argument reflects a common misconception about minority nationalism. There is a tendency to assume that it is the extreme form of "pluralist" multiculturalism, and hence diametrically opposed to any form of cosmopolitanism or postethnic multiculturalism. In reality, however, these doctrines operate at different levels. Nationalism is a doctrine about the boundaries of political community and about who possesses rights of self-government. Minority nationalists assert that as "nations within," they have the same rights of self-government as the majority, and form their own self-governing political community. It is consistent with that view to insist that all nations—minority and majority—should be postethnic or "civic" nations. This indeed is one way to understand the idea of *liberal* nationalism: liberal nationalism is the view that nations have rights of self-government, but that all nations, majority or minority, should be postethnic.

Insofar as it is guided by a liberal concep-

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tion of nationhood, minority nationalism does not reject cosmopolitan multiculturalism: rather, it is a doctrine about the unit within which cosmopolitan multiculturalism should operate. Should this unit be Canada as a whole or Quebec? Spain as a whole or Catalonia? The United States as a whole or Puerto Rico? In none of these cases is the debate about the merits of postethnic multiculturalism; nor is it a debate between civic and ethnic nationalism. All these nations, majority and minority, share a civic, postethnic model in Hollinger's sense. The debate is whether there is just one civic nation within the state, or more.

Hollinger's view seems to be that cosmopolitan multiculturalism should operate at the level of the state as a whole, not Puerto Rico, Quebec, or Catalonia. But he offers no reasons for this preference, perhaps because he has never considered the possibility that minority nations can also promote and embody a civic, postethnic form of nationalism.

Some people might argue that the appropriate unit for cosmopolitan multiculturalism is neither the state nor some substate community, but rather the world as a whole. On this view, states should have fully open borders, and put no obstacle to the mixing of peoples across state lines. This would be a genuinely "cosmopolitan" form of multiculturalism.

Hollinger himself rejects this view on the grounds that Americans form a nation, cherish their national identity, and have a right to maintain it into the indefinite future. That is, he treats Americans as a permanent and enduring group that exercises rights of self-government. In this respect, his preferred model of multiculturalism is more accurately called "pan-American" than "cosmopolitan." He denies that there is any contradiction in affirming a fluid and shifting form of multiculturalism within the stable and enduring boundaries of a nation.

I agree that "the cosmopolitan element in multiculturalism is compatible with a strong affirmation of American nationality." But it is also compatible with the strong affirmation of Puerto Rican or Quebecois nationality. If Quebecois nationalism is "pluralist" because it implies that multiculturalism should operate within the stable and enduring boundaries of a Quebec nation, then so too is the American nationalism that Hollinger defends. Both involve the same combination of fluid multiculturalism within stable boundaries. And I can see no possible liberal justification for saying that Americans have a right to national existence, but not Puerto Ricans or Quebecois.

Does It Matter?

But why does this matter? After all, minority nationalism is peripheral to Hollinger's book. Moreover, the book was written for a domestic audience, like many other recent American books that make only passing reference to minority nationalism. These references may be misleading or inaccurate, but have they really influenced other countries?

I believe they have. Let me give two examples: Canada and eastern Europe. English-speaking Canadians have been heavily influenced by American debates, and one consequence of this has been a reluctance to accord the Quebecois the sort of public recognition of their national identity that they seek.[2] The American influence has made it more difficult to come to an acceptable settlement with Quebec, even though, as I noted earlier, the United States itself is quite willing to extend this sort of national recognition to Puerto Rico. If American writers had emphasized that it was a part of the American practice to accommodate minority nationalisms, then I believe that Quebecers today would not be so close to seceding from Canada.

The situation in eastern Europe is even more serious. If Quebec were to secede, the result would probably be two relatively stable liberal democracies in the northern half of the continent, instead of one. In eastern Europe, however, the inability to accommodate minority nationalism is a threat, not just to existing boundaries, but to democracy itself and to the existence of a peaceful civil society. There is almost a direct correlation between democratization and minority nationalism: those countries without significant minority nationalisms have democratized successfully (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia); those countries with powerful minority nationalisms are having a much more difficult time (Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia).

Given this context, the influence of American debates has been unhelpful in two ways.

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First, it has helped to marginalize the liberal intellectuals within these countries, who often look to American liberals for guidance. Influenced by American models, these liberals have little to say about the accommodation of minority nationalism, except to chant the mantra that the solution to ethnic conflict is "individual rights, not group rights." This is unhelpful because it tells us nothing about how to resolve the issues raised by minority nationalism. The current conflict in Kosovo, for example, revolves around whether political power should be centralized in Belgrade or whether the regional government in Kosovo should have extensive autonomy. The slogan "individual rights, not group rights" provides no guidance about this conflict. Without any clear conception of what justice requires in multination states, liberals have become passive spectators in the struggles between majority and minority nationalists.

Second, American debates have, paradoxically, been invoked by majority nationalists to justify suppressing minority nationalisms. Nationalist governments in these countries have not only studied, but also largely adopted the American rhetoric that a good liberal democracy should be a "civic nation." They adopt the language of liberal democracy and civic nationalism partly to impress foreign observers, but also because it provides an excuse to crush minority nationalism and to strip national minorities of their separate public institutions and rights of self-government. We see this trend in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, and Russia.

It may be surprising that majority nationalists adopt the language of civic nationalism, but they do. And they find this language useful precisely *because* it legitimizes policies that inhibit national minorities from expressing a distinct national identity and demanding national rights.

What we see in eastern Europe, therefore, is an unholy alliance of liberal intellectuals and majoritarian nationalists, both of whom invoke American models to justify rejecting the claims of national minorities. As I noted earlier, attempts to suppress minority nationalism can only be achieved by coercion, and the result has been to create fear amongst the minorities, to exacerbate inter-ethnic relations, and to strengthen authoritarian tendencies within both the majority and minority nationalist movements.

Of course, American writers have not endorsed coercive policies aimed at suppressing minority nationalism in eastern Europe. On the contrary, American foreign policy has often encouraged states to accept some minority claims. Indeed, the American government is currently pressing Serbia to accord autonomy to Kosovo. But Serbian leaders understandably see this as hypocrisy, as yet another case of America trying to impose a settlement on weaker countries that it would never accept at home. After all, don't Americans say that we should fight against ethnic minority nationalism and instead seek to build a single, shared civic nation within each state?

The American position on Kosovo might have more credibility if Americans emphasized that they have accommodated their own minority nationalisms. This is just one of many examples in which the transition to democracy in the multination states of eastern Europe would have been smoother had American writers and statesmen emphasized that accommodating minority nationalism was part of the American reality.

I am not suggesting that American theorists of multiculturalism put issues of minority nationalism at the center of their theories. The situation of blacks is, and should be, at the heart of American debates. But I wish that, if only in passing, Americans would admit that accommodating minority nationalism, far from being un-American or undemocratic, is one (small) part of the American experience. ●

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1. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

2. In a recent article, David Bromwich suggested that Charles Taylor's essay on "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition" is "in some ways a Canadian sermon to Americans" (David Bromwich, "Culturalism: The Euthanasia of Liberalism," *Dissent*, Winter 1995, p. 96). I think this is a misunderstanding. Taylor's lecture is better understood as a sermon to (Americanized) English-Canadians, and his argument is not that American-style liberalism is wrong for the United States, but rather that it is wrong for countries like Canada, which contain minority nationalisms.

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Politics, Protest, and the Avant-Garde

David Lehman

MUST AVANT-GARDE art manifest a radical aim? Does it require a collective identity? Is it the product of an "ideological community"? To each of these questions, Harold Rosenberg—coiner of the term "Action Painting" for the abstract art of de Kooning, Pollock, and the rest—answered yes. He took stock of the avant-garde in the politically charged climate of 1968, the year Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., were assassinated, students seized five buildings at Columbia, and protesters had their heads bashed in at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. "No matter how radical its effects, an action is not avant-garde without an ideology to characterize it," Rosenberg argued. Art that lacks "the will to change the world" is a "parody of vanguardism." Rosenberg conceded, however, that the radical will in a work of art may make itself felt in an almost purely aesthetic way. He could think of no better way to illustrate his "combative" position than with respect to the Fauves and their love of vibrant color in the early years of the twentieth century: "The politics of an avant-garde art movement might consist of nothing more rebellious than overthrowing the conviction of the middle class that color in a painting ought to correspond to that of appearances."

For Rosenberg, the term *avant-garde* conjured up the image of an elite phalanx advancing on an enemy. For that stalwart champion of avant-garde causes, Richard Kostelanetz, the term evokes the image of shock troops on the front lines of cultural battle. But a more persuasive reading of the military metaphor buried in the term *avant-garde* casts the vanguard artist in the role of the spy on an advance reconnaissance mission, a foray into unknown territory. And the spy has always been a morally and politically ambiguous character, mistrustful of authority and prone to insubordination. So, too, the rebellious artist. Jealous of his or her independence, the artist may not want to heed the dictates of a cultural czar. According to Rosenberg, art follows from ideology. History, however, seldom conforms to expectations based on "historical necessity" as revealed by an ideological crystal ball.

The dream of a political art has always been elusive, simply because art forms tend to obey their own imperatives and would be wise to rely on their own resources. Governments are fickle and political revolutions have unhappy endings. Although there are honorable exceptions, the melancholy truth is that political art is usually weak art to the extent that it subordinates its energy to the purpose of making an overt statement. Democratic ideals do not guarantee artistic originality. They don't even guarantee political wisdom. The dismal history of politicized avant-garde art movements stands as a warning. There was never anything to prevent a group of artists, even or especially vanguard artists, from hitching its wagon to the wrong star.

Italian Futurism, which celebrated speed and motion and modern machinery, glorified war ("our only hope, our justification for existence, our will," Marinetti wrote in 1912) at the catastrophic moment when Europe talked itself into World War I. In the twenties, the Futurists pinned their hopes on Fascism and Mussolini. On the other hand, when French Surrealism put itself in the service of the Marxist-Leninist revolution in 1930, disillusionment soon followed. Some Surrealists went down with the ship: Louis Aragon renounced the

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movement to join the Communist Party after André Breton criticized his "*Front Rouge*"—a screeching polemic written in Moscow—as "poetically regressive." But Surrealism achieved its revolutionary importance not because but in spite of such efforts to link artistic innovation to a political cause. The most fruitful Surrealist experiments involved methods of composition designed to liberate the unconscious, and the greatness of Surrealist works (the paintings of de Chirico, Miró, Ernst, and Magritte, the films of Buñuel, the writings of Raymond Roussel, and the prose collaborations of Breton and Eluard) has little to do with their politics but much with the way they assimilate chance, accident, humor, the anarchic id, and the irrational. As Charles Simic has put it, the Surrealists and Dadaists accomplished a revision of the poet from "a maker" to "someone able to detect the presence of poetry in the accidental."

Of the avant-garde revolution in poetry instigated by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot in the years of the Great War and just after, what lasted was the literary breakthrough, not the incidental political thrust of the two poets. Some would argue that Pound and Eliot, who brought modernism into American poetry, then turned around and arrested its development, by becoming an apologist for Mussolini in the case of Pound and a high-church monarchist in the case of Eliot. But what was truly avant-garde in their poetics had nothing to do with the politics they espoused. Eliot in *Prufrock and Other Observations* and Pound in *Personae* had accomplished a sort of surgical strike: they had cut away the poetry from all that was merely decorative in the inherited tradition of Victorian verse. Pound and Eliot emancipated verse from a variety of outmoded exigencies; they insisted that poetry must be at least as well written as prose (as Pound put it) and that traditions were meant to be altered by the individual talent (as Eliot maintained). These were literary developments and they are to be judged for their artistic value, which was great, not their social consequence, which was minimal. This is not to excuse or deny Pound's treason or Eliot's anti-Semitism; nothing can condone these things. Nor would I rebut the charge that, for example, the weakness of Pound's *Cantos*—which Pound himself considered a "botch"—may have something to do with the same flaws of intellect and character that can be seen in his enthusiastic embrace of Mussolini. I would argue that it is precisely where the poetry of Eliot and Pound is continuous with their political thinking that its limitations are most in evidence. But equally I insist that the revolutionary gestures in Pound and Eliot at their strongest—the latter's collage-like appropriation of the literary past in *The Waste Land*, for example—are not infected by the poisonous political virus that led Eliot, on one occasion, to opine that "any large number of free-thinking Jews" was unhealthy for society. Indeed, what was most valuable in Eliot's poetry, from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (with its utter indifference to the Great War going on outside) through "The Waste Land," was precisely that which resisted a political formulation: the speaker's ironic self-consciousness of "Prufrock," the juxtaposition of resonant fragments in "The Waste Land." These gestures, so crucial to the modernist revolution, will outlive the pieties of the *Four Quartets* as an influence and an inspiration.

In the same way, the European avant-garde in the first half of the century created a revolution in art, not politics. The cubists shattered the object, the expressionists tortured the model, and the masters of pure abstraction such as Mondrian pretty much discarded whatever was left of the principle of representation as the proper goal or function of painting. The abstract revolution hit New York hard in 1948 when Jackson Pollock produced the first of his "drip" paintings. *Number One* had no center, no perspectival depth, no illusion of mirror or window, but had such fierce energy and motion that it needed no subject other than itself. In the aftermath of *Number One*, all the rules of decorum came tumbling down. Henceforth a work of art needed to be less concerned with the task of communicating to others than with the expression of the artist's self. It didn't depict anything; it *was* something. No longer did the artist feel bound to give voice to a message, political or otherwise. Messages were irrelevant; the experience of art could not be paraphrased.

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The abstract revolution was an admission that modern technology could more accurately reproduce nature than the artist can. In this sense, it was the camera that transformed the art of painting. But abstraction also signaled something else: a turning inward, a repudiation of nature, a disgust with the external world, including the social and political realms. "The artist must cultivate his own garden as the only secure field in the violence and uncertainties of our time," Meyer Schapiro wrote. "The poet must stand or fall by poetry," Wallace Stevens argued in a *Partisan Review* symposium in 1948. "In the conflict between the poet and the politician the chief honor the poet can hope for is that of remaining himself."

Politics had failed on both the left and the right. Under Stalin the Soviet experiment had regressed rapidly from tragic idealism to totalitarian terror. For its part, the American experiment in democracy had taken a wrong turn somewhere between the loyalty oaths of the Truman administration and the pieces of paper waved menacingly by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The artist's salvation lay neither in politics, by now decisively discredited, nor in religion, which had been edging toward obsolescence from the moment Nietzsche announced the death of God, but in art itself. And art stood in need of reinvention—it was ripe for the avant-garde gesture of erasure. Something drastic was needed to combat the complacent drift of the culture toward ersatz experience: a drift that has brought us, over the years, plastic flowers, vinyl siding, the institution of public relations, canned laughter, photo opportunities, and instant spin control.

The New York Poets

Disciplined nonconformism meant turning a deaf ear to the siren songs of politics. Just as the Abstract Expressionists liberated painting from the tyranny of subject matter, so the New York poets—John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, and others in that band—were intent on freeing their work from the burdens of a political consciousness. At a moment of intense global angst, when it sometimes seemed as if every responsible poem had to have a mushroom cloud in it, they felt that the pursuit of an artistic vocation imposed a different imperative. The artist's vocation required a struggle to attain "the state of spiritual clarity," Frank O'Hara wrote in his monograph on Jackson Pollock. "Only when he is in this state is the artist's 'action' significant purely and simply of itself." It was in this sense that O'Hara's own work is the closest thing in poetry to Action Painting. O'Hara's cult of the artist is a Romantic notion taken to an extreme: the idea that the most crucial element in a poem is not the isolated text or its relation to either the world it describes or the reader it addresses, but rather the figure of the poet as creator, who has made a "monumental and agonizing" effort to achieve spiritual grace. The effort, and not the poem it yields, is what is "monumental." It is "not surprising," O'Hara wrote grandly, "that faced with universal destruction, as we are told, our art should at last speak with unimpeded force and unveiled honesty to a future which well may be nonexistent." Spiritual grace meant that one could embrace the material world and exempt oneself from the political world at the same time. The imagination was a transcendent realm in which one could dwell in moments of rare refreshment, whispers out of time.

When it isn't ignored in the work of the New York poets, politics is neutralized and transformed, as if it were one more crude element in the discourse of the tribe that needed to be captured in art and thus redeemed "with unimpeded force and unveiled honesty." The poets' collective attitude toward politics may be inferred from such a poem as Kenward Elmslie's "Melodramas" (1960), which is dedicated to Kenneth Koch. Notice how one of the angst-drenched symbols of the cold war is rendered as part of the decor, a purely aesthetic experience, in this stanza:

> Mai Lung in the new communal kitchen
> With the black-hammer-striped-and-red-sickle-striped wallpaper
> Plunks down the evening cereal. "Winded from your annual march to
> Protest the dirty sex practices of American priests, eat, o old orphans!"

Politics has turned benignly into wallpaper. Or consider O'Hara's untitled poem beginning "Khrushchev is coming on the right day!" The

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poem is not about the bellicose Soviet leader famous for banging his shoe at the United Nations. In this example of O'Hara's diurnal style, Khrushchev has the weight of a name on the radio news on September 17, 1959; his imminent arrival in New York figures as one element in a collage-like composition whose other parts include blueberry blintzes, the comment of a Puerto Rican cab driver, a painting by O'Hara's friend Grace Hartigan, and the poetry of François Villon. The composition as a whole is meant to suggest an hour in the poet's crowded metropolitan life. The main theme of the poem sneaks in secretly in the poem's second line when "the cool graced light / is pushed off the enormous glass piers by hard wind / and everything is tossing, hurrying on up." Khrushchev returns at the poem's conclusion, but clearly the wind and the light of this September day have stolen the show: "New York seems blinding and my tie is blowing up the street / I wish it would blow off / though it is cold and somewhat warms my neck / as the train bears Khrushchev on to Pennsylvania Station / and the light seems to be eternal / and joy seems to be inexorable / I am foolish enough always to find it in wind."

In 1967, with the nation polarized by the escalation of the Vietnam War, a controversy broke out in the *Nation* between John Ashbery and the combative Louis Simpson on the question of politics and poetry, and it is here that Ashbery gives the definitive statement of O'Hara's (and his own) position on politics. In the previous September, Ashbery had eulogized the recently deceased O'Hara in *Book Week*, then the Sunday book supplement of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Ashbery praised O'Hara as a go-your-own-way individualist unconcerned with whether or not his views were deemed correct by others. "Frank O'Hara's poetry has no program and therefore it cannot be joined," Ashbery wrote. "It does not advocate sex and dope as a panacea for the ills of modern society; it does not speak out against the war in Viet Nam or in favor of civil rights; it does not paint gothic vignettes of the post-atomic age; in a word, it does not attack the establishment. It merely ignores its right to exist, and is thus a source of annoyance to partisans of every stripe." Ashbery continued: "It is not surprising that critics have found him self-indulgent: his *culte de moi* is overpowering; the poems are all about him and the people and images who wheel through his consciousness, and they seek no further justification: 'This is me and I'm poetry, baby,' seems to be their message, and unlike the message of committed poetry, it incites one to all the programs of commitment as well as to every other form of self-realization: interpersonal, dionysian, occult or abstract."

Louis Simpson waited until the following April to take Ashbery to task for these sentiments. Simpson is a poet and critic with a fierce sense of moral rectitude, and he was writing at a time when the great example held up to American poets for emulation was that of the conscience-stricken Robert Lowell. Because of his opposition to the war in Vietnam, Lowell had turned down an invitation to accept a medal from President Lyndon Johnson at the White House in 1965. "We are in danger of imperceptibly becoming an explosive and suddenly chauvinistic nation, and may even be drifting in our way to the last nuclear ruin," Lowell wrote. Lowell's letter to President Johnson, duly printed on the front page of the *New York Times*, made him a hero of the literary wing of the antiwar movement. In 1967 *Time* put him on its cover, and Norman Mailer, marching beside him at a major rally at the Pentagon, gave him an honored place in his Pulitzer Prize–winning account of the event, *The Armies of the Night*. Lowell represented, in short, the ideal of the poet as a public figure, politically enlightened, passionately serious, and always aware of his role in History. Lowell has sometimes "had a bad press for silly reasons" and sometimes a good press "for reasons scarcely less silly," Josephine Jacobsen observed in 1964. "At the moment, it would appear that he can scarcely do wrong."

In this climate, Ashbery's defense of anti-programmatic poetry was heresy. Ashbery, Simpson wrote in the *Nation*, had "complimented [O'Hara] on not having written poetry about the war. This struck me as a new concept of merit—praising a man for things he has not written. But it is not amusing to see a poet sneering at the conscience of others." Ashbery fired off a letter to the editor in response. "I was not

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'sneering at the conscience of other poets,' but praising Frank O'Hara for giving a unique voice to his own conscience, far more effective than most of the protest 'poetry' being written today," he wrote. "All poetry is against war and in favor of life, or else it isn't poetry, and it stops being poetry when it is forced into the mold of a particular program. Poetry is poetry. Protest is protest." This is an argument that we might test with inconclusive results. Is *The Iliad* an example of poetry that is "against war and in favor of life"? Possibly. Are all protest poems nonpoetry, or are we free to exempt such poets as Pablo Neruda and Bertolt Brecht from this charge? Ashbery is unlikely to be a hard-liner on this point. After all, for him and for the New York school collectively any establishment has the right to exist and they have the right to ignore it. As Ashbery wrote in 1968, when yippie demonstrators outside the Museum of Modern Art punctuated the opening of a Dada and Surrealist show, "while it is perfectly OK to heckle the swells descending from their rainy taxis to sip MOMA champagne from fur-lined teacups, it is also OK to be them."

Ashbery has spoken of his own low morale in the early 1950s and cited political factors, such as the Korean War and "the loyalty-oath mentality," as he called it. It was, he told Harry Mathews, "sort of a low point in America." He has told me more than once that the only time in his life that he ever suffered from writer's block was in 1950 and 1951 and that in his mind it was connected with the politics of intimidation in Washington. When Ashbery wrote to the *Nation* to rebut Louis Simpson in 1967, he took the time to make it clear that he had in fact participated in antiwar protests. But the absence of any overt political intent in Ashbery's poetry is conspicuous. He has a poem entitled "The One Thing That Can Save America" (1975), which doesn't divulge the answer to the query implict in the title but compounds it with other questions ("Is anything central?") having to do with civic pride and public lives. "These are connected to my version of America / But the juice is elsewhere," Ashbery writes. He acknowledges the private nature of his poetry: "I know that I braid too much my own / Snapped off perceptions of things as they come to me. / They are private and always will be." But this concession to an invisible debating partner turns into another question: what about the possibility that the poet's private experience may make him exemplary? The last stanza of the poem is a brilliant example of what Ashbery elsewhere calls "fence-sitting raised to an esthetic ideal." A poem that is nominally about the private self in the public sphere concludes in the wait for a letter that never comes, warning of danger:

> It is the lumps and trials
> That tell us whether we shall be known
> And whether our fate can be exemplary,
> like a star.
> All the rest is waiting
> For a letter that never arrives,
> Day after day, the exasperation
> Until finally you have ripped it open
> not knowing what it is,
> The two envelope halves lying on a plate.

This is a prophetic poem—and, in some attenuated sense, a political one. But it is far from political in the sense intended by poets such as Bertolt Brecht and Adrienne Rich who believe that poetry should protest injustice.

I AM FAMILIAR with the argument that Ashbery is politically radical on the deep syntactical level—the level of form, which precedes content. The wildly experimental poems in *The Tennis Court Oath*, written and assembled in the city where the guillotine dispensed Jacobin justice, could be described as revolutionary and apolitical at once. The book's title refers to a signal event in the French Revolution. On a handball court in Versailles, rebellious members of the Third Estate convened to take their revolutionary pledge on June 20, 1789. Three weeks later the Bastille was stormed and the revolution was on. But if Ashbery's title announces a connection to the world historical events of 1789, one looks in vain for any reference to political upheaval in the pages themselves. The book's revolutionary gestures are entirely in the realm of form—Ashbery does to conventional syntax what Robespierre did to the monarchy. Here is an excerpt from the title poem:

> the water beetle head
> why of course reflecting all

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then you redid you were breathing
I thought going down to mail this
of the kettle you jabbered as easily in the yard
you come through but
are incomparable the lovely tent
mystery you don't want surrounded the real
you dance
in the spring there was clouds

The odd excitement in these lines would be lost in a more conventional, less truncated telling. All semblance of a narrative has been eliminated but some ghostly idea of a narrative hovers; the drama rests in the interruptions and the leaps. Perhaps part of the point is that "the Tennis Court Oath," that phrase familiar to legions of high school history students, is founded on a mistranslation of the French *jeu du paume*, literally "game of palm," which refers not to tennis but to handball. Ashbery's appropriation of the phrase can be seen as furthering the linguistic processes whereby meaning disintegrates. But it can also be seen as Ashbery's disloyalty oath: a violent rebellion against the rules of language itself.

There are those who contend that Ashbery's poetry in the years since *The Tennis Court Oath* has continued to mount an assault on what poststructuralist critics call the hegemonic discourse. Perhaps it does. Ashbery's irony, his belief that misunderstandings are inevitable, and his further belief in the power of misunderstanding as another name for the transformative work of creative intelligence—these are central to his poetry. And his jubilant use of cliches, as in these lines from "Getting Back In" (1995), argues a skepticism that is just short of subversive:

What is this "today" you speak of so incessantly?

It's where the rubber meets the road and they discuss
in one long fawning kiss. It's the posse's
new poster child. It's . . . My system was downloaded
but bogus retorts are still coming out of it.
It's pleasures and palaces. A commitment.

But the question is whether these are fundamentally political gestures or whether it wouldn't be wiser to take Ashbery at his word when he maintains that poetry and protest are in two separate categories and that the former is life itself for him while the latter is an occasional extraliterary duty. At a question-and-answer session at the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop in the fall of 1996, an enterprising graduate student asked the poet to describe the theoretical political dimensions of his poetry. "Well," Ashbery replied, "I'm a Democrat."

Does the Avant-Garde Exist?

Is the avant-garde, with its dedication to the art of the future, a thing of the past, hopelessly obsolete in an era of postmodernist eclecticism and parody? Not necessarily, though it has a lot going against it. Once avant-garde has been identified publicly as a good and rewarding thing to be, there is no stopping the hordes from invoking the gods of vanguardism to justify their productions. In an application of Gresham's Law, the bad art committed in the name of the avant-garde will chase out the good. So it has happened. The fact that something advertises itself as avant-garde art is no guarantee that it is either art or avant-garde. In the best of times, the distinction between true artistic innovation on the one side and meretricious novelty on the other is difficult to discern and impossible to enforce. Today the task is complicated by the relentless hype that seems to accompany every new exhibition, with the effect that the intrepid gallerygoer is constantly on guard for fear of being had.

At such a moment, it is difficult to regard the term *avant-garde* as anything but an honorific, and a hollow one at that. The whole concept is therefore in bad odor, though that is subject to change—or to redefinition. I tend to Fairfield Porter's view that there will always be an avant-garde "if we define the avant-garde as those people with the most energy." Porter himself, a magnificent realist who specialized in landscapes and still lifes and portraits at a time when pure abstraction was the height of fashion, illustrates that a contrarian impulse, a maverick strain of American independence, is a more valuable avant-garde quality than an ability to recognize and pursue the route of perceived correctness. The avant-garde artist, from this point of view, is the artist who is hidden among us, the exception. Avant-garde art has not disappeared; it has merely ducked into a

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subterranean cave and stayed there, waiting to be discovered. In the meanwhile, however, there is no denying the detrimental effect that indiscriminate acceptance can have on new art. The absence of cultural resistance gives rise to the seemingly unquenchable thirst for novelty, which leads in turn to Andy Warhol's conception of fame as an erasable interval lasting fifteen minutes. The Abstract Expressionists had a grander sense of fame and a loftier notion of time, and this is true of the New York school of poets as well.

The poets fulfilled the requirements of an avant-garde art movement without half trying. They were dedicated to the original and new, and implacably opposed to the poetry of the academy. But they did not confuse the new with the ephemeral. They never forgot that the aim of a poem was to live forever. They were interested in the eternal, as opposed to the merely permanent, to paraphrase an Ashbery poem. Nor did they blind themselves to the self-contradictions bedeviling their (or any) avant-garde movement as the 1960s neared their end. "Today one must fight acceptance which is much harder [than fighting neglect or hostility] because it seems that one is fighting oneself," Ashbery wrote in 1968. "If people like what I do, am I to assume that what I do is bad, since public opinion has always begun by rejecting what is original and new?" He found no easy way out of this dilemma, except to recommend "an attitude which neither accepts nor rejects acceptance but is independent of it." From now on it was, so far as he could see, every artist for himself or herself. Today's young artist, he wrote, "must now bear in mind that *he*, not *it*, is the avant-garde."

An Infinite Laugh

Ashbery's paradoxes, which approach the status of conundrums, and his logic, which proceeds by the baroque elaboration of a metaphor, are two qualities that might be called postmodernist. In Ashbery, however, these modes of irony are put at the service of a spiritual quest and an imaginative aspiration. The questions Ashbery raises are not the questions of postmodernism. What is heaven, and how am I to achieve it? What is the difference between the merely permanent and the possibly eternal? What can we know?

Kierkegaard in *Either/Or* has a parable about a man who has been summoned to heaven, where the gods allow him to make a wish. Does he want a fortune in gold? Fame? The love of a beautiful woman? He must choose: he has just one wish. Which will it be? "I wish," he says, "to have the laugh always on my side." And now the gods begin to laugh, which is how the man knows his wish has been granted, for it would not have been in keeping with the spirit of the occasion for the gods to have intoned solemnly, "It is granted thee." The celebration of laughter in this parable, the lone human wish for it and the celestial eruption of it in reply, make it seem peculiarly apposite to the poets of the New York school. Interested in the metaphysical dimensions of a joke, they recognized the comic as part of the lyrical impulse, not its antithesis. The echo of an infinite laugh reverberates in their work. "That was a good joke you played on the other guests," Ashbery writes enigmatically in "The Skaters." "A joke of silence."

The poets who were drawn to the Club and the Cedar Tavern wanted to expand the possibilities for poetry in much the same way that the Abstract Expressionists had done for painting. The poems O'Hara, Ashbery, and Koch wrote in their radical early phase approximate the experiments of the Abstract Expressionists most overtly in establishing that medium and message are mutually inextricable. As James Schuyler wrote in "The Morning of the Poem," his masterpiece,

> So many lousy poets
> So few good ones
> What's the problem?
> No innate love of
> Words, no sense of
> How the thing said
> Is in the words, how
> The words are themselves
> The thing said: love,
> Mistake, promise, auto
> Crack-up, color, petal,
> The color in the petal
> Is merely light
> And that's refraction:
> A word, that's the poem.

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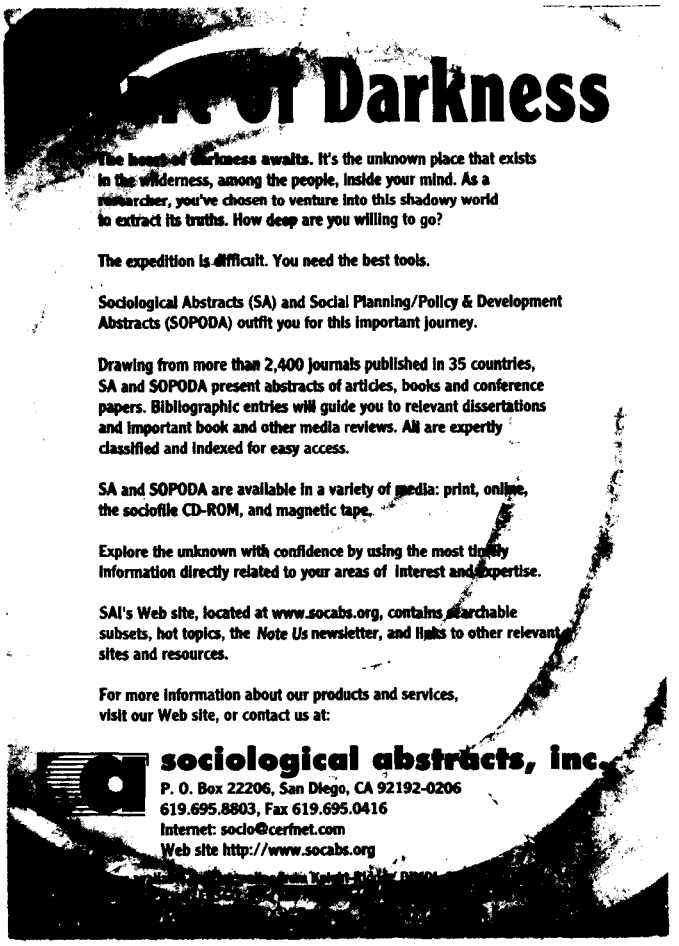
Preferring heterodoxy to orthodoxy, wit to solemnity, joy to melancholy, the experience or enactment of our moment in time rather than the moral castigation of it, the New York poets were aesthetes in revolt against a moralist's universe. They opposed the ancien régime, the Anglo-American literary tradition as embodied in the works of T. S. Eliot and the New Critics, and they were equally against the politically committed didacticism of the Beats and the poets of political protest. They believed that the road of experimentation leads to the pleasure dome of poetry, and in pursuit of this goal they went, identifying the reader's pleasure with the author's happiness. They figured out how to do it, how to write modern poetry in America in works so much in advance of the sensibility of the age that they seem freshly minted today. In short, they were the avant-garde—the last avant-garde in American poetry. ●

DAVID LEHMAN is a poet, critic, and editor.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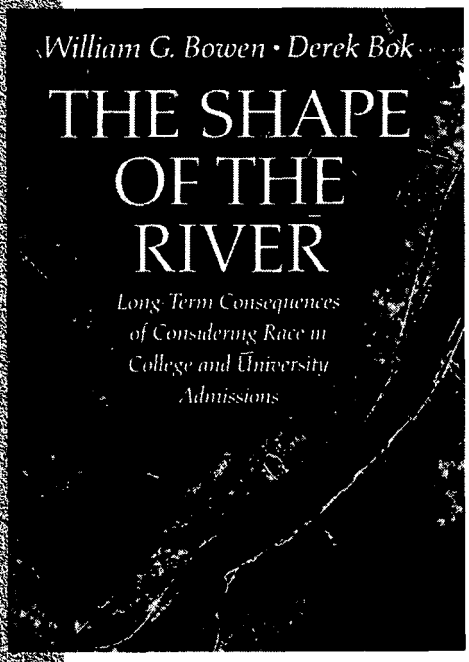
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THE SHAPE OF THE RIVER
Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions

THE SHAPE OF THE RIVER

Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions

William G. Bowen and Derek Bok

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Our Scarlet Letter Complex

Nicolaus Mills

FROM THE very beginning of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic nineteenth-century novel *The Scarlet Letter*, it is easy to hate the Puritans he so carefully describes. They are not simply content to make his heroine, Hester Prynne, wear a scarlet *A* because she had a child out of wedlock. They also want to humiliate her by forcing her to reveal the name of her lover. In Hawthorne's eyes, the Puritans' conduct is far worse than Hester's. He will, however, concede their moral seriousness. Although they make Hester stand alone on a scaffold in the town square, there is on their part "none of the heartlessness of another social state which would only find a theme for jest" in her predicament.

We are a long way from Puritan New England, but as the 1990s draw to a close, it is clear that the sexual scandal has become the signature event of the decade. From President Bill Clinton to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas to Senator Bob Packwood to Air Force General Joseph Ralston to comedian Bill Cosby—the list of those accused of sexual wrongdoing includes some of the most prominent figures in American life.

In contrast to the Puritans, we, however, attach few overt moral or theological judgments to the sex in our sexual scandals. We talk about the recklessness or impropriety our sex scandals reveal, and in the case of unmarried welfare mothers, we complain about paying taxes to support their children. But that is as far as we go. We long ago stopped being a society that punished out-of-wedlock sex or expected the young to wait until marriage before becoming intimate. What is most revealing about our sex scandals is the disillusionment they reveal in us with the consequences of the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

We have entered an era in which no public figure—from entertainer to politician—can expect that his or her sex life won't become news if anything unusual about it is discovered. It doesn't matter if the sex in question was consensual, if nobody got hurt, if no national issues were involved. By the media standards of the 1990s, the bedroom is no longer privileged territory.

In this post-Watergate period, when cynicism about everyone in public life reigns, what has made possible this change is abandonment of the rules that in the past made reporters unwilling to explore the rumors of an affair between a Dwight Eisenhower and a Kay Summersby or a John Kennedy and a Marilyn Monroe. Mainstream and tabloid journalism are no longer clearly distinguishable. A tabloid story, once broken, will now be carried by the mainstream press as a news item and thus legitimized. Still more important, the mainstream press and the networks, in their desire to be first with a story, have become competitors with the Internet. What guides them, as it did the papers engaged in the yellow journalism wars at the turn of the century, is a media ethic that puts the highest premium on the scoop.

Economically driving this rush to publication is the ability of lone operators, such as Matt Drudge of the *Drudge Report*, who suffer few consequences if one of their scoops proves false, to beat out the major papers and networks by releasing a story over the Internet. But at the core of the nineties sexual scandal and the rise of mainstream tabloidism is an even deeper change: a cynicism that treats sex —and, by extension, sexual privacy—as unworthy of protection.

It is a cynicism that D.H. Lawrence described in his 1929 essay "Pornography and Obscenity," in which he argued that pornog-

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raphy is the very opposite of art that provides us with the "sunshine" of sexual arousal. Pornography, Lawrence wrote, is the attempt "to insult sex, to do dirt on it," by making it seem trivial and nasty. Nineties sexual scandal embodies the same pornographic feelings about sex, and predictably its main arena has been the trial or public hearing, where in the typical sex scandal the most intimate details of a person's life are exposed, then subjected to the analysis of strangers, and finally turned into entertainment.

The prominence of the sex scandal in contemporary American life represents an important cultural victory for the political right, comparable to the political success it has had in transforming the way welfare rights and affirmative action are now seen. Senator Jesse Helms and Ronald Reagan's secretary of education William Bennett, along with Moral Majority founder Reverend Jerry Falwell can take credit for the enormous influence they have had in bringing about an era of sexual suspicion. But to see our contemporary scarlet letter complex as only the handiwork of the right is to underestimate the much deeper assault on sex that has peaked in the 1990s. But the sexual McCarthyism that has brought us to the point where fellatio in the White House between the president and a female intern is treated as if it were an impeachable offense reprsents the kind of cultural shift that the religious and political right could never have engineered on their own.

In her 1993 book *Only Words*, feminist lawyer Catharine MacKinnon begins her opening chapter with the following description of what sex has become for women: "You grow up with your father holding you down and covering your mouth so another man can make a horrible searing pain between your legs. When you are older, you husband ties you to the bed and drips hot wax on your nipples and brings in other men to watch and makes you smile through it." It is a horrifying description—consistent with MacKinnon's assertion in *Feminism Unmodified* that "to be about to be raped is to be gender female in the process of going about life as usual"—but instead of making MacKinnon seem beyond the pale in her view of what sex has become for women, it has helped give her mainstream respectability. One of the staunchest defenders of Anita Hill, MacKinnon has become a television talk-show regular and is constantly called on to testify before Congress when questions of censorship and pornography arise.

Even more telling, MacKinnon's grim views of sex, along with those of her radical feminist ally, Andrea Dworkin, who contends that intercourse is a "means of physiologically making a woman inferior" and that "violence is male; the male is the penis," have over the course of the nineties become embodied in some of the most widely read writing of the decade. These days we don't have to search far to find MacKinnon's and Dworkin's central message—men are sexual monsters—at the core of the work of women writers who reach huge audiences. In Kathryn Harrison's memoir, *The Kiss*, the monster is her divorced father, a minister with whom she began an incestuous affair while she was a college student. In Dorothy Allison's coming-of-age novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*, the monster is her narrator's stepfather, who forces himself on her while she is a teenager, and in Paula Vogel's off-Broadway hit play, *How I Learned to Drive*, the monster is her central character's uncle, who begins an affair with his niece while she is still a girl.

Nor do matters get any better when we turn to pop culture. In rap, misogyny runs deep. Whether it is the Geto Boys in "Mind of a Lunatic" exclaiming, "Her body's beautiful so I'm thinkin' rape," or 2 Live Crew in "The Fuck Shop" promising a woman "I'm gonna slay you rough and painful," or the West Coast rapper Just-Ice declaring, "The only love I got is psychopathic homicide," the picture of sex is grim. Women are portrayed as hos and bitches, and men are glorified for treating them as such. Beyond rap, the pop-culture obscenity diminishes, but the picture of what men want from sex doesn't improve. In the film *Kids*, it is teenage boys—who don't care about spreading AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases—who are the villains. In *In the Company of Men*, it is corporate executives who can't resist turning sex into a brutal game, and in the futuristic *Strange Days*, it is the men of

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the new century who are the bad guys, preferring virtual-reality snuff porn to actual sex. Even Woody Allen, once the master of light comedy, has, as *Deconstructing Harry* shows, ended up creating a nineties movie persona whose obsession with scoring makes us wince rather than laugh at his bedroom antics.

It is enough to give sex in general and men in particular a bad name, and over the course of the nineties it has. As journalist Candace Bushnell put it in *Sex and the City*, we have entered the Age of Un-Innocence. "No one has affairs to remember—instead we have breakfast at seven a.m. and affairs we try to forget as quickly as possible." To make matters worse, all too often our answer to the kind of exploitative sex our culture presents as the norm has been revenge on an even grander scale. In real life the classic revenge scenario was played out in 1993 when Lorena Bobbitt, the battered wife of former marine John Bobbitt, cut off his penis after what she said was a night of brutal sex. At her trial Bobbitt's supporters weren't content to claim that she was a victim who had been pushed into a terrible act of vengeance because she didn't know what else to do. Instead, she was treated as a feminist heroine who had struck a blow for abused women everywhere. The mutilation of her husband was turned into a joke, as those who rallied to her defense put on buttons proclaiming "Lorena Bobbitt for Surgeon General" and wore teeshirts declaring "Love Hurts." In the press the same tone was struck after her acquittal. Even the usually skeptical culture critic Barbara Ehrenreich couldn't resist slyly noting in a *Time* magazine essay, "If a fellow insists on using his penis as a weapon, I say, one way or another, he ought to be swiftly disarmed."

Art has, unfortunately, kept pace with real life. The revenge film and the revenge novel have managed to set the sexual tone for the nineties. The pattern was established at the start of the decade in Ridley Scott's 1991 buddy film *Thelma and Louise* in which Louise (Susan Sarandon), enraged by an assault on her friend Thelma (Geena Davis) in a parking lot, shoots Thelma's would-be rapist, thereby creating a situation in which the two women become fugitives from the law. As they flee west, virtually every man they encounter turns out to be a pig of some sort, and until the police catch up with them, they have a fine time putting the men in their place, using their smarts and Louise's gun to good effect. Finally trapped, they commit suicide by driving their car into the Grand Canyon, but not before they have established the idea that dignity for women means humbling men as brutally as possible.

Like the "Thelma and Louise Still Live" bumper stickers, it is a premise that has flourished in the film's wake. In her 1993 novel *Foxfire*, Joyce Carol Oates took up the same theme with a story about a teenage-girl gang that finds the only way to deal with the abusive men in their world is to outdo them with violence, and as the decade has progressed, men have, albeit disapprovingly, latched on to the notion that revenge is the primary sexual nexus in contemporary society. In Michael Crichton's novel *Disclosure*, an angry woman finds that filing false sexual harassment charges against her ex-boyfriend is enough to all but ruin his career. In David Mamet's play *Oleanna*, an angry student discovers that all she needs to do to prevent her professor from getting tenure is claim that he propositioned her in his office, and in Paul Verhoeven's film-noir thriller *Basic Instinct*, Sharon Stone shows that as long as she can seduce the men she hates, she can get away with murdering them.

In a world in which the bedroom is such a battlefield, the one constant is that nobody—no matter how innocent-appearing—can be trusted sexually. In the 1980s we got a preview of how far such distrust could be carried in a series of nursery school sex trials—notably the 1983 McMartin Preschool case in California and the 1985 Margaret Kelly Michaels case in New Jersey, in which preschool workers were charged with the most fantastic sex crimes (in Michaels's case licking peanut butter from the genitals of the children in her care and playing "Jingle Bells" on the piano while nude). Michaels and the McMartin defendants were ultimately acquitted, but what their Salem-like trials and the willingness of prosecutors to believe the charges against them foretold was an environment in which sexual suspicion would rule the day.

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In 1993 Antioch College made headlines when the media found out about its "Sexual Offense Policy," which required students engaging in sex not only to get explicit verbal permission from each other when they began but before each new act of intimacy. For talk-show hosts and columnists, it was easy to get laughs by imagining two Antioch students on a date, but since the Antioch rules were first published, the suspicions on which they rested have, if anything, become more widely codified in American society. Businesses from IBM to Staples now have formal policies for regulating office romances, and these days at the college level, it is faculty who are the focus of policies banning relationships between students and teachers. Codes like those at Yale and Virginia, which explicitly ban faculty-student relationships, even when consensual, are increasingly the rule.

In this atmosphere, the result has been a new emphasis on sexual exposure, on bringing to light relationships that would not have been approved of had they been known. In the case of John F. Kennedy, the consequence has been a mini-industry based on digging up information on the affairs he had before and during his presidency. For the tabloids, as well as such celebrated investigative journalists as Seymour Hersh, the reporter who wrote the first account of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, Kennedy's sexual past has provided a feeding frenzy. Furthermore, in the sexual atmosphere of the nineties, even long-dead presidents are targets for having their romantic lives examined. Since the decade began, Thomas Jefferson has gotten almost as much attention as John Kennedy on the premise that he had a thirty-eight-year relationship with his slave Sally Hemings. Beginning in 1994 with the reissue of Barbara Chase-Riboud's steamy novel *Sally Hemings*, in which the fifteen-year-old Hemings seduces the forty-four-year-old Jefferson while telling herself, "His presence for me was command enough," we have had a steady diet of Jefferson-Hemings tales. In 1995 there was the Ismail Merchant, James Ivory, Ruth Prawer Jabhvala film *Jefferson in Paris*, in which the mature Jefferson was putty in Hemings's hands. Then, in 1996, in *The Long Affair*, the historian Conor Cruise O'Brien took up the Jefferson-Hemings liaison as a way of talking about Jefferson's politics, and in 1997, in her study *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, law professor Annette Gordon-Reed, treating the alleged Jefferson-Hemings affair as if it were a legal case, argued that the evidence, particularly Hemings's patterns of conception, gave solid grounds for concluding that she was Jefferson's mistress.

For living public figures, the interest in their past sex lives has been even more intense. In 1975, when Larry Flynt brought *Hustler* national attention with a five-page pictorial of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis sunbathing in the nude on the Greek island Skorpious, there was a protest over the sleaziness of his ethics and no effort by the mainstream press to exploit the photos. But in the 1990s an altogether different ethic has come to prevail about prying into private lives. When writer Joyce Maynard recently announced that she intended to publish a memoir about her ten-month affair in 1972 with novelist J.D. Salinger—and in the process make use of twenty-five letters Salinger sent her—the criticism she drew in no way threatened her project. The same was true for the attacks on the supermarket tabloid *Globe*, when it did a sex exposé on ABC sports announcer Frank Gifford by paying a flight attendant he knew (but had never been intimate with) $75,000 to lure him to a hotel room where there was a hidden camera. Most papers simply reported the Gifford story as daily news, as they did when an anonymous tipster cost Air Force General Joseph Ralston his chance to become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by disclosing an affair he had thirteen years earlier while separated from his wife. In the sexual climate of the 1990s, snitches and voyeurs can, it is clear, count on having our full attention and, within the media, enormous tolerance as well.

Small wonder, then, that in dealing with her "friend" Monica Lewinsky, Linda Tripp felt she would encounter few objections if she taped their conversations and then made use of the juicy gossip they contained about the president. And smaller wonder still that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, after getting

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Tripp's tapes, did not feel there was anything smarmy about asking Lewinsky to wear a hidden microphone into the White House so she might get the president to talk about their sex life. Both were taking their cues from our nineties war on sex.

COPING WITH a culture in which sex has been made ugly in this fashion has not been easy for us as a nation, and with increasing frequency we have come to resent those who have made us feel dirty. The rise in the president's popularity after he was accused of having an affair with Monica Lewinsky is no accident. The numbers, which in an early *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll showed the president with a 79 percent approval rating and Kenneth Starr with just 22 percent, reflect our sense that we are being fed bedroom tales that are none of our business and benefit nobody.

The problem is that our resentment hasn't been enough to change our current sexual culture or lessen our fascination with the lurid stories we are getting about the president. The all-news television channels saw their ratings rise by more than 50 percent in the second week of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. The MSNBC News Web site recorded a nearly 300 percent increase in daily hits, and the *National Enquirer,* which made an unsuccessful offer of $750,000 for Linda Tripp's tapes of her conversations with Monica Lewinsky, saw the viewings of its Web sites more than triple. Nor has much changed since the year began. New information about the president and Lewinsky still gets immediate network coverage, and from *Rivera Live* to *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, a series of syndicated talk shows feed off the Lewinsky story as they once did the O.J. Simpson trial. In the July *Vanity Fair* it was even possible to see a Herb Ritts photo shoot of Monica Lewinsky in which she was billed as "the face that launched a thousand subpoenas."

In the race to get the Clinton-Lewinsky story, what has paid off is getting the story first. Getting the facts wrong—as the *Dallas Morning News* did when it reported a Secret Service agent had seen the president and Lewinsky in a "compromising situation," or as the *Wall Street Journal* did when it reported that a White House steward told investigators that he had seen Clinton and Lewinsky alone in the Oval Office—has carried no real penalty, save exposure in a magazine like *Brill's Content*. The only papers and television stations that have lost out as a result of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal are those that have failed to jump on the peep-show bandwagon. Thus we have had the phenomenon of a somber Ted Koppel discussing oral sex on *Nightline*, *People* magazine running a cover story titled "All the President's Women," and novelist Erica Jong speculating in the *New York Observer* about whether the president used a dental dam in his encounters with Monica Lewinsky.

More difficult to assess, apart from the obvious political fallout, is how deep the damage goes from a culture that, on the one hand, asks us to be voyeurs, and, on the other hand, makes sex seem dirty. By way of contrast we need only think back to the famous 1972 *Cosmopolitan* centerfold in which Burt Reynolds, then at the height of his film career, posed nude, one hand covering his private parts, while he smiled as he stretched out on a lion's head rug. It was a marvelous spoof on the silliness of the traditional skin-magazine cover, and at the same time, with a confident and handsome Reynolds in on the joke, it was also a reminder of the pleasure we take in imagining the physically perfect lover. A quarter of a century later, it is difficult to imagine a film or a magazine portraying sex with such a combination of humor and admiration. Viagra jokes are the best we can do when it comes to sexual humor. And when it comes to sexual irony, we're stuck with rock star and underwear model Mark Wahlberg exposing himself at the end of *Boogie Nights* and admiring his own penis.

Just how changed we are is epitomized by *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione offering Monica Lewinsky two million dollars to tell her story and pose for his magazine. The offer, as William Ginsburg, Lewinsky's lawyer at the time, angrily observed, was insulting and vulgar, but what is hard to dismiss is the thinking behind it. Your life is over, Guccione was in essence saying to Lewinsky. You have become a national joke. You might as well get

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some money to compensate for the indignities that you will be subjected to no matter what else you do. We can quarrel with the tactlessness of Guccione's proposition, but what it says about our current sexual culture is on target. The more absorbed we become by it, the more turned off we seem to get.

Once upon a time our movie marriages were joyous. A film like *Father of the Bride*, where a tearful Spencer Tracy nervously gave away Elizabeth Taylor, made us laugh at its domestic comedy, but we never lost sight of the romantic belief in the future father and daughter shared. These days, a remake of *Father of the Bride* notwithstanding, the tone of our movie marriages is all ironic. We focus on the emotional disasters they parade before us. In *In and Out* the laughs come from Kevin Kline playing a bridegroom who disappoints his bride by announcing that he is gay on the day of his marriage. In *My Best Friend's Wedding*, the jokes depend on a scheming Julia Roberts doing everything she can to spoil the wedding of a man she once loved and now wants back. Even our notions of courtship have taken an ugly twist. As reflected in Ellen Fein and Sherry Schneir's backlash how-to-get-a-husband book, *The Rules*, courtship has nothing to do with love and everything to do with sexual frustration. As the authors explain early on, their advice to women is "to make Mr. Right obsessed with having you as his by making yourself seem unattainable."

WHERE THIS leaves us is at a point at which getting news from the sex front feels like getting news from the war front. It is information we can't ignore, but we go away feeling empty and act accordingly. Our absorption of sex story after sex story hasn't led to our making sex a major part of our lives so much as contributed to an environment in which the opposite is the case. Three decades after the sexual revolution, our own sex lives, if the most recent Survey of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago is to be believed, are nothing to brag about, if frequency matters at all. Only one person in twenty is sexually active three times a week. Fifteen percent of the adult population accounts for 50 percent of all sexual activity, and those with the highest educations are the least sexually active. People who have been to graduate school average only fifty-two sexual acts a year, while those who have been to college average just sixty-one.

It is a dilemma, personal and cultural, from which there is no easy way out. Lawrence's impassioned plea in "Pornography and Obscenity"—that we begin the process of change by adopting "a natural fresh openness about sex"—is not likely to win many converts in an era when overexposure rather than repression is the main problem. What we do have going for us, however, is a sense, if not a direct memory, of better sexual times. Our nostalgia for a past in which sex seemed both richer and subtler may be seen in the huge audiences that *Titanic* and the remakes of Jane Austen's courtship novels have drawn, as well as in the popularity of a retro film like *Sleepless in Seattle*, where the two lovers never meet until the final scene and in homage to the 1957 Cary Grant–Deborah Kerr romance, *An Affair to Remember*, arrange to have their meeting on the observation deck of the Empire State Building. These days we don't want to take the steam out of sex, but in our best moments we know that it requires what we don't now have: a context in which how we think and feel about each other gives our passion depth. ●

NICOLAUS MILLS is currently at work on a new book, *Bedroom Wars: The Rise and Fall of the Sexual Revolution*.

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When First I Knocked

Sven Birkerts

THERE IS—or used to be—a high unprotected railroad trestle on the outskirts of Ann Arbor. Narrow, constructed of massive beams, it was straight out of a cinematographer's imagination, just the sort of place that a romantically suicidal undergraduate would think to go, although I don't know whether anyone ever did successfully—or even unsuccessfully—jump from there.

I no longer remember the string of events that got me and my friend Whitney up there, but one very early morning in the spring of 1970, still somewhat high from the mescaline we had dropped the night before, we were balancing our way across, daring each other on, trying not to focus too comprehendingly on the Huron River moving in shadow far below us. Whitney would shuffle a few feet ahead, I would follow. From time to time we would gaze at each other with the mocking hilarity of the insane. "*Ándále, ándále, muchacho*," we sputtered back and forth in the cartoon voice of Speedy Gonzalez—don't ask me why.

Whitney and I, best friends from high school, were in the last week of our freshman year at the University of Michigan, though I don't think it would be possible to have been any less invested in studies or college life than we were. Whitney would go off traveling that summer, looking for some click of connection, and would end up dangerously ill from dysentery picked up in his wanderings in India and Afghanistan. I would shortly be taking incompletes in most of my courses, scrawling what I thought were revolutionary witticisms in my blue books. I had big plans, too. I was going to expatriate myself—simply not come back from my summer travels in Europe. I was ready to say goodbye to America, sell my passport on the black market, and live on the bum. I would sleep in fields, work for my meals. I had been reading *Tropic of Cancer* and my brain was on fire.

During this time, still living in the freshman dorm, I was smoking marijuana regularly, taking mescaline and LSD with some of my crazier hallmates. I was shoplifting—"liberating"—books and other necessities from campus stores on an almost daily basis. Instead of going to classes, I had been staying up all night, sitting in the undergraduate library paging through the big world atlas, or reading my Henry Miller, or hiding away in a carrel up in the stacks with my notebook and a contraband bottle of Ripple wine. There I would busy myself writing out my plans, my fantasies, my Thoreauvian manifestos about a better, truer life.

Odd—how we make our way into our lives. Now I get a picture of that early morning—the two of us shivering and grinning and not much more than a misplaced step from terrible injury or death—and I see it as an image extracted from a continuum, or, less politely, a free fall that would only break, months later, in a cheap room in Barcelona, when I sat on my bed and wept in frustration because I knew that I could not see my plan through, that I would have to return home, that my grand escape was a fiasco.

But at that moment, high, determined to outfox the whole mad system, I was sure that I was on the very brink of liberation, and that some astonishing consummation was imminent. Whitney and I—and my other great friend, Marcus—we were then still buying the youth-culture promise that a total revolution of being was in the offing.

The very first hints of this culture—and promise—had reached me and most of my friends by way of the transistor radios we held pressed to our ears from earliest junior high

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on. There were phases and stages, of course, deviations of fashion in one direction and another, but the deeper momentum held steady. For the first time in history the world was being handed over to the young. And although music was the main conduit in the beginning, eventually clothes, hair, books, politics—*everything*—followed.

BUT WHEN did the whole business begin? Certainly we all remember the feeling of the Beatles being "in the air"—first as something new, then as an irresistible ongoing public performance. But I also remember standing in Ed Downing's pharmacy right across from Walnut Lake School and hearing erupt from somebody's transistor the first buzzing guitar notes of "Satisfaction," knowing at that moment that some barrier had been breached and that something new and unsettling was out in the world, something that could not be sucked back into the radio and unplayed, ever.

I was in junior high then. All my friends—the kids I chose to hang out with, or hung out with by default because I was not a jock or a surfer-type—were getting interested in bands, starting their own, talking nothing else but guitar and amp trivia and which bands were playing at which school dances. I had the same hunger. I got my parents to pay for a rental guitar—an electric Gibson, cherry red—from Grinnel's. I, too, hung around at the sock hops (which is what junior high dances were called then) held in the gym after every football or basketball game. I was too nervous around girls to even think about dancing; I was happy to stand right up by the side of the stage, watching the musicians, studying their hair, their jeans, and trying to memorize the chord progressions they were playing. I remember getting dropped off at the Birmingham Teen Center by my—or somebody's—mother, and wedging in, front and center, to hear local boy Bob Seger's new band, finding myself queasily fascinated by the guitarist, who not only had the longest hair I'd ever seen on a male, but who was as pretty as a girl.

All of this was happening quite early on—the time of junior high—but I would not say that it was the real beginning of the sixties phenomenon. Some of the elements were in play, but the feeling was not yet there. At least so far as my friends and I were concerned. Yes, the radio blared rock and roll as loud as we could get it, and we all practiced striking universal poses of rebellion and disaffection, lighting fresh cigarettes from smoldering butts and chugging our filched cans of beer with the insouciance of sailors on shore leave. But even this was not yet it. Something hidden from us was still ripening.

Nor had it revealed itself, quite, in 1967, when I entered upon what would be the first of many seasons of deep disaffection. But where the later seasons were generally obscure, hormonal, without outline or specific origin, this one grew out of a clear affront. My parents, unhappy with what they saw of Groves, the large public high school I now attended, and the kids I was spending my time with—my rock-loving, smoke-frenzied compatriots—decided after long deliberation to send me to Cranbrook, the all-boys private school just down the road. I would go as a day boy, of course, but I would have to submit to the far more rigorous schedule of classes and activities.

It was then—powerless, trapped, forced to knuckle under to my father's will, which he so loved to exercise—that my rebellion took the form of inner separation. Shouting would have availed nothing, I knew that, and threats and refusals just excited him to greater displays of strictness. I decided I would simply carry on my real life deep inside, where he couldn't see it. Which meant, in that first isolated, unbefriended year, that I sat in my room with the door closed, listening to my records—my Bob Dylan; Peter, Paul and Mary; Donovan—daydreaming and reading. I must have appeared to be a good kid—docile, compliant—and my parents must have thought that their plan was working. But I think now that I was just husbanding my energies, sharpening my sense of grievance. I was unhappy, terribly lonely, yet—if this is not too overt of a contradiction—I also loved my exile. Coming when it did—I was fifteen—it gave me the most intense and promissory intimations of self. I lay with my head between the stereo speakers, feeling the knife-edge of sadness and alien-

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ation, but when I rolled over and saw the trees blowing outside my window, I felt the gift of the future was somewhere being wrapped for me.

This long season of self-submergence, this period of indrawn breath, was where my sixties began. For it was at this time, in this unstructured receptivity, when I was focused upon discerning what might be next, that I registered the first real tremors, the original signals of what would be an eruption unlike anything I had known. They came by way of the radio; radio brought the first stirrings of the rough beast.

I had been listening—starting with pop music—ever since I had been given my first transistor in seventh grade. The little leatherette-encased plastic box was on all the time. When I brushed my teeth in the morning I had my radio on the shelf; I was listening to DJ Dick Purtan's cynical chatter and the countdown hits of the moment. I lay in bed at night with the earplug tight in my ear. I took in Motown, the Beatles, the later British bands, early West Coast rock like Buffalo Springfield, the Byrds. When I started buying records, it was mainly folk music, which was harder to get on radio. But I loved the album covers, the misfit-looking figures posed with their guitar cases against raw urban backgrounds, the whole magic summed up for me in the words "Bleecker Street." I bought albums on the strength of images and associations, and I listened to the music until it became part of the sediment of self.

THEN, at some point during that long first year at Cranbook, I found my way to FM radio. It was like a fuzzy signal resolving itself into a clear note. Out of the blur that represents so much of this time in memory comes the bright image of myself lying on my back on the white carpet in our upstairs living room. My eyes are closed, the sound is way high—I must be the only one home. The song is "I Shall Be Released"—Bob Dylan's song, but done in eerie high harmony by a group identified as the Animal Crackers—the group, soon to be rechristened The Band, that had been working as Dylan's backup band. This was no longer AM rock—this was something different, and I found my way in as through a door with my name stenciled on it.

At that time there were two alternative FM stations in Detroit, WABX and WRIF. I listened to the latter, especially—religiously—to a disc jockey named Uncle Russ. I listened for the revelation of the music, the deep saturations of sound that were so utterly unlike what I had been listening to before. Here were the long cuts, the real cuts, the songs that by sheer virtue of length repudiated the whole canned ethos of Top-40. This was music made for itself, not for profit. Creedence Clearwater's interminable "Susie-Q," "Time Has Come Today," by the Chambers Brothers, "Crossroads," by Cream, strange things from San Francisco, from the Grateful Dead, from Jefferson Airplane. I took all of it, indiscriminately, perhaps because coming in from behind the music was something else—was this intimation that I have been trying so hard to zero in on. The sounds, the lyrics, were charged with it, and I think I would have found my way there even without guidance. But Uncle Russ, consummate mellow-voiced—"stoned-voiced"—host, was there to weave it all together. The music, the culture, the sly low confiding style of talk, and the winking suggestion offered at every turn that a whole other world existed and that these songs were its advertisement. I knew a bit about drugs, marijuana, though I had never tried it—the opportunity had not yet come up. Russ obviously knew a great deal about it. His voice, drawing the call letters of the station forth from his deepest contemplative soul—"W . . . R . . . I . . . Effff"—told the listener that he was himself irretrievably stoned. His anecdotalizing, in the same voice, put a thrilling new spin on the most mundane bits of chat: "Man, I was out riding yesterday with my lady . . ." or "I ran into some freaks, some brothers, on the corner and they sure had a funny look . . ."

Now I suspect that Uncle Russ was an easygoing fraud, giving suburban kids what they were wanting, and that he had no special key to the doings of this subculture. But then, thirsty, I inclined my ear to his every syllable and I began to believe the story that he was telling us. Elsewhere—in San Francisco, New York, on certain corners in De-

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troit—was a life, a strange new rising energy, that had absolutely *noth*ing to do with the safe and affluent and complacent world it was my sorry fate to inhabit. It was a perfect cliché—my furiously judgmental fifteen-year-old's perception of the lives around me, and the righteousness with which I excluded myself. The life I was asked to live was a fraud; everything about it was a lie. But the music knew, and Russ knew, and these people he talked about—the "freaks"—whom I had begun to glimpse here and there, on street corners, driving by in oddly decorated cars on Woodward Avenue, they knew. But the distance was too great. I could not suddenly pretend to be like them.

So I simply tuned in, wandering about and fantasizing. I was alone. I had no circuit, really, no social element from which to draw the clues and the solidarity I needed. I receded into the corner of my room, sat on the bed strumming my guitar, and if my parents went out I quickly got to my cigarettes and went out behind the house to smoke.

I linger here, not quite willing to let this odd miasmic period go. I feel that if I cannot understand who I was at this point, then I will be able to make nothing of that exciting and disturbing image of Whitney and myself daredeviling our way across that high trestle; and without clarity there, much that follows must also remain obscure.

WHEN I THINK back on these months, the analogy that comes most readily to mind is also the most obvious: that of the metamorphic transformation of caterpillar into cocoon into butterfly. Not that I would, for an instant, liken my emergence into the sixties to the ordained unfurling of the butterfly. But there is something about that interim phase—that dull, inert-looking cocoon—that seems right. The thing just *sits* there, like something shat onto a twig. But no, inside the dressing room, surreptitious and purposeful, the event is preparing itself. My indrawn solitude, with its music and musing, and the jottings I made after paging through my Ferlinghetti—this was my changing place. I was fifteen and knew little—but now I knew that something was coming.

College? I remember sleeping through countless classes and actually convincing myself that my dereliction was a political act. The university was just part of the system, the same system that was dropping bombs on the North Vietnamese, that sponsored the ROTC program just a few buildings over. We were "the people," and our truth was getting high and being together and not hurting others. We turned out in great numbers against ROTC that fall, and the police came out in riot gear to break us up. We gathered—almost daily, it seemed—on the "Diag" at lunchtime, where speakers got up to decry the war, where petitions were sent around. Ann Arbor was, after all, the birthplace of Students for a Democratic Society. People like Tom Hayden, David Dellinger, and Rennie Davis were always passing through, giving rally speeches from the steps of the graduate library. I was there—we were all there—pumping our fists in the air, chanting things like "Power to the people!" and "Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh, NLF is gonna win—" I'm not sure I could have told you much about what the NLF was or what half of the rhetoric was about. But I was cool, and being cool meant having your body out there to swell the crowd. I had one eye on the speaker, and one eye, always, on some girl in a denim jacket a few feet away.

My sixties were not political. It is a truth I'm ashamed to concede, for so many people around me seemed to care passionately about where the country was going. My sympathies were with the radicals, of course. But my self-involvement was so complete that there were almost no sympathies left to distribute. My sixties—my counterculture years—were about striking poses, not striking. I was full to the brim with rage, but it was a confused rage. I said it was against the system, against authority and structure, but much more it was against my father. When I traveled with a half million others to Washington, D.C. that fall to march, it was not U.S. involvement in Vietnam that I was really protesting, but my father's arrogance, the willful, critical way he had acted toward me while I was growing up. Probably it was not so neat as that—these things all flowed together. My father was on Nixon's side—he despised the unruly decadence of the

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whole youth movement. Therefore, to march and chant and pump my fist in the air, and then to sit in someone's parked van and get drunk on Ripple wine—it was all the same thing. It was somehow getting at my father, even though he likely did not know I had left my dorm and was halfway across the country. Busily making history.

MY RELATIONS with my father were probably at their most strained during this year and the next. I remember that he would drive to Ann Arbor every Thursday to teach a graduate seminar at the school of architecture, and that on some of these Thursdays we would have lunch together at a place called Dominick's. How painful these occasions were for both of us—me desperate for the hour to be over so that I wouldn't be spotted with my suit-wearing father, and my father trying his hardest—and not always succeeding—to keep to himself his comments about the way I looked. What a relief I felt when he said goodbye and headed off to the art and architecture building and I could hurry around the nearest corner to light up a cigarette.

There is no point in trying to order events from that long year—only the general trajectory matters. And that was, certainly from my father's perspective—and even the perspective I hold now—resolutely downward. The partying continued, intensified, as the fall semester went on. I was getting high every night, it seemed, and barely getting through my classes. My attitude grew more sullen, more arrogant. For part of that year, I remember, my father had brought his mother, Merija, then quite old, over from Latvia to visit. She was living at our house and I was obliged to go home on certain weekends to spend time with the family. I resented this, of course, and I made my resentment obvious. One night, at dinner, I announced to everyone that yes, I thought marijuana should be made legal, that I smoked it all the time, and so did everyone I knew. I saw my father trying to contain himself in his mother's presence and I took pleasure in the hurt I inflicted.

It was at some point during these months that I began to read Henry Miller and to claim him as the voice of my liberation. I had picked up a little paperback somewhere called *Quiet Days in Clichy*, and I was dipping into it while waiting for an afternoon concert to begin. Suddenly I forgot everything I was doing and intending. I went back to my dorm room and lay on the bed, reading about this free-spirited, resourceful writer-rogue. I wanted nothing more than to be like him, on the bum, hopping from bed to bed, cadging meals, living close to the street, but also utterly tuned in to the hidden momentum of the spirit.

From that little book I found my way to others, the two *Tropics*, the volumes of the Rosy Crucifixion trilogy—*Sexus*, *Plexus*, and *Nexus*—and in fairly short order, ungrounded as I was in any strong sense of reality, I began to conceive of a plan. I would check out of this corrupt system, get away from the sneers and criticisms of my father. I would go to Europe, not to travel, but to live. I would stay there, be an expatriate. How I loved the sound of that word. I honestly saw myself living a glorified tramp's life—in Paris, in London, on the Greek islands, in Spain. I would drift where situations took me, take what jobs I found, live on my wits; I would be a gypsy, right up against the fresh pulse of things.

The whole fantasy sounds so outlandish now—I can't believe that I was entirely serious. But no, I filled journal after journal with lists of what I would need; I studied maps. Things were different back then. Wandering was in the air. Hippies were drifting everywhere, starting communes, living on the road, trekking toward the Himalayas. I would be a part of that vast migratory population. And one day I would write about it.

When spring came, when the weather sharpened my desire to be wandering, I bought my airplane ticket. I had a few hundred dollars saved, and I would make more over there, selling my return ticket. I had heard, too, that there was a thriving black market for U.S. passports. I could "lose" mine, claim it had been stolen, and get a new one. It no longer mattered that I would finish out my freshman year with a string of incompletes—each was further proof of my determination to not look back. It did not matter what my parents thought—so I told myself—for they would get

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it eventually. I would write and explain everything. I repeated to myself for the thousandth time the lines from the opening of *Tropic of Cancer*: "I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive." In this spirit—ready, chafing—I scored some quality mescaline and headed over to Whitney's.

Of the evening—our "trip"—I remember nothing. I have only the picture I began with, the two of us having talked ourselves into the heroics of crossing the railway trestle at sunrise. The point? I'm no longer sure. It was a ritual, I think, a way we had of sealing a pact, a recognition that most of existence was idiocy, but that in our adventures, our sleepless manias, our exhausted sunrises, we had found the secret way through. I write these words and realize that nothing could sound more vague. But we understood each other's vaguenesses back then—we knew the romantic longings that lay behind them.

When we reached the far side, felt the ground come up under us, we looked at each other with that Keatsian "wild surmise." Here was another one for the books.

I ENDED THE school year in disgrace—the first time this had ever happened to me, the first time that my intellectual vanity had not kicked in to rescue me. I just didn't care. No, I was in fact proud of my incompletes, took great pleasure in the thought I had abandoned the pretense of college life. Sitting down to take my last exam, in Chinese literature, I stared long and hard at the question sheet. I knew I was not going to address myself to any of the questions, but still I stared. Then, picking up my pen, smiling to myself, I very carefully drew a picture of a butterfly with wings open. Below it, taking care with my calligraphy, I wrote:

> Professor Crump fell asleep and dreamed that he was a butterfly. Or was it a butterfly that fell asleep and dreamed it was Professor Crump?

Gathering up my rucksack, looking out over the bowed heads of my classmates, I strode up to Professor Crump's desk and set the blue book down. I paused only long enough to see that he was looking at me with a pained and inquisitive expression. Then I nodded, half bowed, and left the room. And for an hour or two, abroad in the May sunshine, I convinced myself that I had never been more true to myself, or freer.

My ticket was round-trip, and my parents had no idea that I did not intend to use the return. Given the finality of the step I was planning, I marvel at how normal I acted around my family. Dorm life was done with and I was back home. I was happy to have a few weeks to sleep and read and consider my plans. I took long walks and played with my little brother. I said nothing about my disastrous year at school. Grades would not be mailed until I was long gone.

The night before my flight—before I left for six weeks to England and France—my father took me out to Fox & Hounds, a fancy restaurant. He was, I could tell, primed for a man-to-man talk and I tried to hold up my side. We both drank wine, and the more we sat, philosophizing, the more oppressive my secret became. Finally, riding the good feeling that seemed to be between us, I let on, with great casualness, that I had some ideas about staying in Europe for a time. "If I like it," I said, "I thought I might take some time off from school, find some work—"

My father scarcely missed a beat. He looked straight at me, set his jaw, and said, "No."

"What do you mean?" I felt a fluttery agitation.

"I mean you will do nothing of the kind. You come back when your ticket says or you don't go at all."

"But—" The familiar tears of frustration—which I so rarely let him see—welled up. I was at once hurt and fortified. If *that's* what he wants. . . His intransigence, his refusal to even hear me out, was making it easier for me. All he cared about was preserving his authority. I would follow the plan anyway. Then he said, apropos of nothing I had said, "You'll break your mother's heart." And against that there was no defense.

When I flew to London the next afternoon, I was still resolved. But I would wait to see what came my way—where I ended up, who I met—before doing anything final. I trusted

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that the path would be shown to me when the time was right. That was the extent of my metaphysics then. Decision making was part of the long view and I was bent on living as much as I could in the glory of the moment.

The itinerary was vague. I would travel around England for ten days until Marcus arrived, then the two of us would travel for a time. Whitney was landing in Luxembourg some weeks later. And my then-girlfriend, Nina, and I would write to each other about whether we might hook up.

I WAS ENTIRELY on my own and thrilled. Everything was an adventure, a story to tell Marcus and Whitney. After spending a few nights in a cheap doss house off Piccadilly Circus, I hitched around southern England—fancied myself quite the roguish tramp as I sneaked around residential neighborhoods stealing milk bottles from front porches. In Winchester I spent a night with an old Cranbrook friend and fell madly—if briefly—in love with a beautiful Pakistani girl who went to school at nearby St. Swithun's. Then I hitched back to London, met Marcus, and the two of us bounced around the same basic places, carrying on an elaborate fantasy in which he was called the "Dover Pro" and I was his sidekick, Billy, and we were hunting for girls to fall in love with. We crossed to the mainland, and then, after a few days in Amsterdam, during which time we frequented the legal hash bars and roamed along the canals, Marcus met an exotic-looking blonde named Enneka, who offered to travel with him to India.

Marcus and I parted by a bridge. I remember sitting down that night and writing a melancholy poem about two friends traveling in different directions, which ended: "Each of us/ Leaving for the world from a corner." And then I was off to meet Whitney.

With Whitney I covered France, north to south, hitchhiking, walking around Paris the whole night because we had no place to sleep—we stole a baguette from an unlocked car—and then hurrying to get out to the countryside. There we tried to hitch and had poor luck. We spent days walking side by side down rural roads, scheming, confiding ourselves, screaming insults at the motorists who blew by us. We lived on bread, cheese, and chocolate, slept in fields, and we made our way in slow spurts down to the French Riviera, where we foolishly imagined we would meet interesting people who would take us in. But it was clear the moment we got there—we saw how the shopkeepers folded their arms and stared at us, how the beautiful women did not even know we were on the sidewalk—that we did not belong. And so we pointed ourselves toward Spain, ending up one glorious molten evening on the Rambles in Barcelona, stunned by the sight of so much fruit, so many birdcages, the smells in the air. There, inadvertently, we insulted a bar filled with prostitutes (we didn't know) by refusing them, one after the next, when they sat down and asked if we might buy them a drink. There we drank with a table full of Algerians, who enjoyed our grunting and pointing enormously until a phalanx of Guardia Civil suddenly rushed through the door and with sticks and kicks herded them into the alley, whereupon they were all loaded into a truck and taken away. There, too, in the cheap room we rented, I broke down. Sitting on the edge of the bed, drinking beer, writing my thoughts in my journal while Whitney read, I suddenly knew I would not be able to fulfill my plan. I did not have the resources, the languages, the skills. Winter would come and I would have nothing, no barrier. And I missed my family. It had taken me all that traveling to understand that. I lay on my bed, turned away from Whitney, tears streaming down my cheeks.

Two weeks later, after ten days of sleeping on the beach on the island of Formentera, after spending an afternoon in jail for nude bathing (I had met up with Nina and she had to bribe the arresting officer with a roll of pesetas), after being denied entry into England for having no shoes (mine had disintegrated, and Nina had to buy some on the other side of customs and throw them across to me), I found my charter group and took my seat for the flight home. ●

SVEN BIRKERTS will publish *Readings*, his fifth book of essays, early in 1999. This essay is adapted from a longer work in progress.

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Fathers and Sons

Michael Kazin

In 1980, I began to keep a file of letters from my father. I don't remember exactly why I decided to preserve the letters, to treat them as historical documents and not just as his responses of and for the moment. Perhaps it was the heart bypass operation he had about that time—and my first recognition that the torrent of words would someday stop coming. Perhaps it was my marriage that summer, a sure sign that, at thirty-two, I was finally taking adulthood seriously (that's my wife's interpretation). As a political obsessive, I am inclined to emphasize the fact that 1980 was the year my father and I began sidling—ever so gradually and seldom without mutual complaint—to the same side of the barricades.

In 1980, partly thanks to Ronald Reagan, I gave up my dreams of revolution and began to appreciate the merits of social democracy—just at the time when its historical moment also seemed to be passing. But also thanks to Reagan, my father became a fighting liberal again. Here's his letter from March 18, 1981: "Send me stuff you publish, it delights my awakening, I mean reawakening, rebelliousness . . . I was planning to go down to my grave as a virtuous anti-Communist but your California man is driving me back to some very old feelings. . . . Oh well, who ever said politics is the art of the possible?"

I had argued—shouted—my own tune of rebellion in the sixties. His memoir *New York Jew* contains some wrenching anecdotes about the radicalization of a boy named "Tim" and the suffering it caused his divorced father.

Indeed, we had a lot to get over. There was the 1966 article in the *New York Times Magazine* about freshmen at Harvard who were sons of famous fathers. It included a Bundy, a Campanella, a Schlesinger, a Kempton, and a Kazin. I was quoted saying that I had never actually bothered to read my father's books—which wasn't true but certainly had the desired effect.

There was the Thanksgiving dinner at his apartment in 1967. Fresh from a campus protest against recruiters from Dow Chemical—a company that was manufacturing napalm—I accused America of committing "genocide" in Vietnam and compared all supporters of the war to "good Germans." At the table, Richard Hofstadter wryly quoted Susan Sontag on America beginning with a genocide. Didn't the nation's history seem rather flat, he suggested, if framed that way? From the other side of the turkey, C. Vann Woodward and his wife looked on silently.

In the latter half of the sixties, I was, like Bazarov, the antihero of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons,* eager to negate and "deny everything . . . with indescribable composure." Of course, I detested those who ran "the system" for compromising on black freedom and lying about Vietnam. But, having read just enough Marx, I was sure I had the key to how history and society worked—and just as sure that liberals like my father had no idea, or rather were wedded to a sentimental faith in free speech and the Democratic Party. How could they ever grasp the quiet fury of the Viet Cong or the passionate rhythms of Fidel? All over the world, the revolution was coming; the old men would just have to get out of the way.

But the New Left's bad reputation, which helped Richard Nixon crush that innocent liberal George McGovern in 1972, began to nudge me rightward—toward a more sober brand of radicalism. Although we'd often been right about what was wrong, our solution (participatory communism?) was, at best, incoherent and, at worst, at odds with

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the common sense of ordinary Americans.

By the early eighties, I had replaced contempt for my father's politics with tempered applause—even though he still liked to greet me on the phone, with singsong irony, as "comrade." And even though he often ended his letters with such lines as, "Any chance of your coming out here before you Seize Power?"

I realized the old man was fighting the good fight, even if his hopes for victory and reform were about gone: in March, 1983 he wrote, "I've asked the NY Review to send you my satire and blast on the neo-conservatives. I hate them but my article will not do much good, I guess. In analyzing my own position, vis-a-vis you especially, I realize how much of a 'cultural' conservative I am but always, because of my hatred of POWER, a 'radical' in the sense that whatever is, to reverse Alexander Pope, tends to my sight to seem *wrong* . . . I have no solutions for anybody, am just a literary critic and dilettante who functions by reading fiercely. My reactions lately to Begin and Reagan and practically everyone else have led me out of everything, have isolated me (in my heart) more than ever."

Two years later, in May 1985, he was still feeling isolated—but was still fighting: "At a recent meeting in NY celebrating *Partisan Review*'s 50th anniversary, I and I alone of the doddering ex-radicals asked to pay tributes made a point of denouncing the US policy toward S. Africa. I derisively quoted scummy Prof. Kirkpatrick voting against everybody else when she was still at the UN on account of the resolution condemning the murders in S. Africa had [in her words] 'an excess of language.'"

This was the same Alfred Kazin who always admired the anarchists, who was proud of his grandfather's short career as a union organizer for the Hebrew Trades in the 1890s, whose father was a loyal Socialist, and who quoted his mother saying, in Yiddish of course, "We'll do it if we live . . . and if not, we'll do it anyway."

Gradually, I began to understand that my father's anticommunism was not a way of opposing change from below, of wanting to keep the irrational masses at bay. He hated the Soviets and their ilk because, in the lands they controlled, they seemed to make democratic change impossible.

In the late summer of 1983, I pressed the case to him that the U.S. and USSR were equally repugnant empires competing for dominance. He responded, "In the boom-and-bust, dog-eat-dog world of the free market, those who do not benefit from it or those who have an adversary tradition can and do keep up a running fight. I needn't add how many little revolutions have occurred and keep on occurring in this cruel but still liberal society. The adversary tradition is one that both of us, in different measures, have been allowed to live all our days so far. [But the] ideological state has no rules except its own, insists on the senseless power of books, music, the most pathetic and powerless religious promptings for no reason but the fear of *differences*. Reagan cannot keep Salvador, Chile, etc. under control forever. There is no chance that the Polish people will ever be liberated from Soviet control by a revolution of their own."

So he was an imperfect prophet. But his larger point stands. It was not reform-minded communists who made the revolutions in Poland—and Czechoslovakia and East Germany. It was utopians, inspired by a strangely compatible mixture of reason and religious faith—dreamers whose dreams were not so different from my father's.

SO I GRADUALLY came to appreciate the wisdom of the old liberal. And, writing my own books about Irish labor bosses in San Francisco and populist talkers and activists all over the landscape, I also came to admire his brand of patriotism: tough-minded, eternally wary of kitsch and platitudes but deeply in love with America—its land, its personalities, its language, its ideals. For him, America was a lifelong passion, greater than politics but never entirely separate from them either. In a 1995 preface to *On Native Grounds*, he recalled beginning the book at the age of twenty-three, sitting at his mother's kitchen table in Brooklyn. He was, he writes, "critical of 'the system' and crazy about the country." Not a bad motto for radicals and anarchists and social democrats and unapologetic liberals in this era of the Newt and the Bill.

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Over the past two decades, son began to converge with father in the classroom as well. When I began teaching in the late seventies, I was still, at heart, a radical organizer, on temporary leave to various history departments in the San Francisco Bay Area. I attempted to fire up my undergraduates with stories about the injustice of capitalist power and the resistance of virtuous workers, slaves, suffragists, and anti-warriors.

But agitational simplicity didn't wear very well—on my students or on me. Gradually, I learned the virtues of ironic reflection and the joys of narrative. While I still wanted my students to have opinions and defend them, I now thought they should earn the right to take a stand, by first absorbing some of the husky detail and moral complexity of the past. "Talking to you about American history," my father wrote in 1991, "reminds me of why Hofstadter was so important to me—there wasn't an item in our glorious and inglorious past we didn't savor like the most wonderful food."

MY FATHER retained, in equal measure, his ardor for teaching and his exasperation with the marching ignorance of our times. After spending a semester at one of the campuses of the University of North Carolina in 1984, he wrote, "My only real problem, as usual with students in literature, is that they are shrewd but non-literate, and I do get tired of mentioning exotic, out-of-the-way books like *Hamlet* and *War and Peace*, the very sound of which seems to puzzle my students."

I know, I know, I told him. In my own classes, when I refer to Samuel Gompers or Frederick Douglass or Eugene Debs or Frances Perkins or even Woodrow Wilson, the vacancy signs go up—and I have to stop lecturing and become an encyclopedia, much abridged. And it gets harder and harder to persuade students that the past is truly past, that it's not particularly meaningful to dismiss as "racist" both Charles Murray and Elizabeth Cady Stanton—even though, separated by a century, both of them voiced doubts about the intellectual abilities of black people.

Many of my students are quick to deny everything, yet few have Bazarov's confidence that nihilism is the path to a better world. They embrace cynicism because they are bewildered, and sometimes lazy, about the possibility of understanding history and about their ability to unravel the mysteries of good prose.

And here, my old man had the most to teach. He never forgot, and never allowed me to forget, that when it comes to politics or literature, it is the quality of the writing that counts. Late in the sixties, during a dinner in Cambridge, we fumed about revolutions past and future. After several glasses of wine, he shouted, as if to end the argument, "I'm a damn good writer, I know I am."

Once, when I was a teenager, I thoughtlessly remarked that I was "verbalizing" some thought or emotion. Stop! he commanded. How could I use that horrible "Eisenhower word"?

His letters in the eighties kept this up, if in a more encouraging tone:

From July 1984: "Well, I hope you are seeing your way clearly on the book, I feel not only that your narrative gift should be emphasized all the way but that the narrative will bring out the significance of the material as interpretation alone will not. Trust the story, the drama of those Irishers (and workers) taking over!"

From September 1984: "Thanks for your article, which I thoroughly agreed with but which, if I may play teacher once more, saddened me by all sorts of glib and vulgar current parlance. For Chrissakes Kazin, how can a radical and critic of mass culture refer approvingly to someone as a 'best-selling author'? You sound like a teevee commercial. . . ."

In 1987, he wrote about one of my book reviews, "I do wish that you would omit the banal English—'rich descriptions of the working lives.' Never never write, 'Montgomery writes insightfully. . . .' This is bureaucratic English, of the kind every academic illiterate in sociology or some such 'bunko science' employs. And do you recognize the grammatical mistake in the following—'the role each played . . . governed what form of collective resistance they mounted.'? Obviously the *Nation* didn't."

In 1993, I wrote to him anxious about how my book on populism would be received, worried especially that my ideas weren't compelling enough to satisfy reviewers. He wrote

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back: "The only question should be, 'Have I been entirely faithful to what I think?' Inevitably, other people will criticize you, will be hostile, jealous, stupid, God knows what else. After all, you are writing about a thorny and militant subject at a time of tremendous political letdown. The right, the ex-left, all sorts of critics will be after you. None of that should matter . . . . Just go ahead once you've searched your mind again."

Of course, such judgments could be intimidating. How did he deliver them so precisely, so elegantly? Often, I stuttered while talking to him on the phone, wanting to get the words just right. Letters were easier, a little. And when people learn that, yes, I am related to *that* Alfred Kazin, the reflected glory often fades and gives way to affectionate envy.

I still shudder in wonder when I read his description of Jewish Brownsville in the 1920s in *A Walker in the City* or his coming to terms with William Blake, in an introduction published just after World War II:

> Blake's tragedy was the human tragedy, made more difficult because his own fierce will to a better life prevented him from accepting any part of it. Laboring after the infinite, he felt himself shadowed by the Accuser. That is the personal cost he paid for his vision, as it helps us to understand his need of a myth that would do away with tragedy . . . Blake was a man who had all the contraries of human existence in his hands, and he never forgot that it is the function of man to resolve them.

How does one respond to this gift? To the absolute refusal to accept muddle-headed, dishonest prose or a politics reduced to getting power and clinging onto it?

Well, it's easier when you receive letters like this one, from the fall of 1984. Referring to a recent argument, he began, "I was about ready to give you back to the Indians this evening (I return to dirty, delicious NY tomorrow) when your handsome letter was turned in. I have to say that just as I forgive everybody everything if I've had a good day at the typewriter, so I forgive you. . . ."

In the end, it is enough to be the son of a stubborn lover of democracy—and a damn good writer. ●

Michael Kazin is the author of *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, a revised edition of which has just been published by Cornell University Press.

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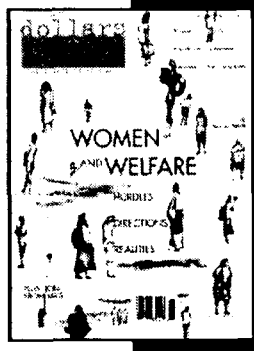

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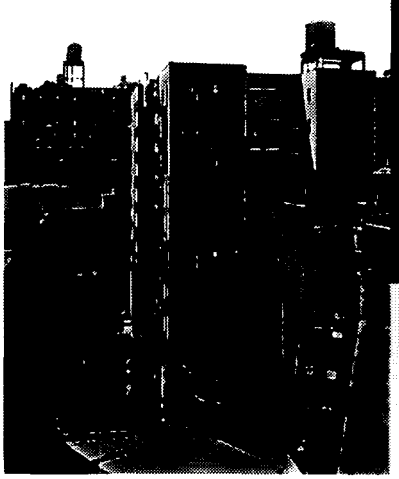

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On European Citizenship

Replies to David Miller

Seyla Benhabib

As the countries of the European Union (EU) move toward a common currency in the year 1999, jitters have gripped parts of the European left that see in this process the twilight of democratic popular sovereignty and the dawn of the reign of Eurocracy. Even Helmut Kohl, the champion of European unification, has expressed nervousness about giving up control over national currencies to a European Central Bank.

To be sure, there is much to be concerned about in the "democracy deficit" of the institutional development of the European Union, but nostalgic nationalism is no answer to the challenges facing the European experiment. Furthermore, to identify the nation-state as the privileged site of democratic self-determination and social justice, as David Miller ("The Left, the Nation-State, and European Citizenship," *Dissent*, Summer 1998) does, is neither conceptually nor institutionally convincing. Emerging out of a customs union and border agreements among a handful of European countries, what was once named the European Economic Community has evolved into one of the more interesting multinational confederations in modern political history.

There *is* a democracy deficit in the European Union—not, as Miller thinks, because democracy can exist only as the self-expression of a united national will of the people, but because a whole range of issues and policies is being settled without open cross-national information and debate. As the process of European integration accelerates, more and more decisions are being made behind closed doors, at the level of the European Council of Ministers or at the bureaucratic-administrative level in Brussels. The ministers' recent decision establishing a common administrative unit to deal with refugee, asylum, and emigration issues is one such instance. More spectacularly, since the treaty of Maastricht and the ministers' demand that member countries reduce their deficit spending to 3 percent of their annual budgets, fiscal conservativism has reigned supreme in economic policy. There are real trends within the EU to use unification as an excuse to dismantle the Keynesian welfare state and European social democracy, and to inaugurate a neoliberalism *à l'Américaine*.

I am in complete agreement with David Miller that the left should not turn away from these bread-and-butter issues. Unlike Miller, however, I do not believe that these issues can be settled only at the national level. It is true that smaller countries like Denmark understandably fear being swallowed up by more powerful countries, who in turn want access to the European markets without carrying the burden of sharing with their poorer neighbors. The moral dilemmas of solidarity and egotism, which afflict nation-states within, are reproduced at the level of the union. That is why an EU-wide discussion about minimum social rights, maybe even a guaranteed minimum annual income, can serve the cause of social justice. The next step is indeed the expansion of social rights in Europe and their harmonization across national borders. This requires the establishment of Europe-wide parties; the creation of many European public spheres through newspapers, radio stations, and television channels; and a serious debate at the level of the European Parliament about how and by whom economic and social policy issues should be determined.

More serious, in my opinion, is another economic issue that David Miller does not face squarely. It is impossible to reconcile the level of economic well-being that the more prosperous European countries enjoy today with the

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kind of nationalist autarchy that Miller envisages. European capital expansion needs the European market, and most national governments are aware that they can maintain their populations' level of well-being only if they let capital flow freely across borders and not reign it in. This creates a dilemma: more and more firms are escaping the control of their "national homes" by moving operations across borders. The Austrian social democrats lost the national elections in 1996 because they could do nothing when a German tire manufacturer, Semperit, picked up and moved to Bratislava. The German Social Democrats (SPD), who are trying to learn from these lessons, are cautiously talking about the need to control such movements by asking companies to compensate their home populations before they leave. Such economic discussions must take place in public forums among the member nation-states of the EU, as well as on the EU level. For it is obvious that national governments can guarantee economic welfare for their populations only by working with the union and not against it; and they can avoid putting themselves at a disadvantage vis à vis the more capital-friendly policies of their neighbors only if there is a transnational coordination of policies. The old adage that there can be no socialism in one country is still true; today there cannot even be social democracy in one country. Frankly, I do not see what Miller's brand of national welfarism has to offer to the economic and political dilemmas facing social democrats and socialists in Europe today. Would it not be more politically savvy to work for the formation of a common social democratic vision at the level of the EU? If the German SPD wins the elections this fall, there will be a social democratic majority in the European Parliament, and the European left will have an unprecedented opportunity to set new social policies.

WHY DOES David Miller think that the nation-state is the privileged site of democratic self-determination? I find the argument that trust can be established among members of a nation more readily than among members of a class, across social movements, or language groups, simply a speculative hope. Furthermore, what does trust have to do with democraticself-determination? Democratic decision making requires respect for others with whom, no matter how opposed our viewpoints, I must come to agreement on some, not all, issues. I need to trust them only insofar as I know that, in the face of conflict and disagrement, they will respect the same principles of constitutional adjudication that I will. Democracy has never meant unanimity; it is not only about consent but about dissent; it is not about national homogeneity but about how to deal with the rights of minorities. David Miller does not tell us how "nationhood" is supposed to be a "common source of identity, particularly in societies that are sharply divided along lines of race, ethnicity, religion, or lifestyle," when these divisions assume salience precisely because the national consensus has excluded minority voices in the past. Miller offers as cure precisely the causes of the malady. Democratic self-determination does not require national trust, but constitutional loyalties, a civic culture of respect for minorities, and solidarity with our fellow human beings within and outside national borders. I would like to think of such solidarity in terms of Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of a "union of unions," which has been invoked by John Rawls. Respect and solidarity certainly begin with those closest to us, but like concentric circles in the water caused by the falling stone, they can expand.

In fact, postnational European identities resemble such concentric circles. Within the larger framework of the EU, what is happening today is a reconfiguration of national cultures and linguistic and ethnic alliances. A Europe of regions is emerging, with ambiguous consequences for democracy: although we can see the process of administrative and legislative devolution in Wales and Scotland as an augmentation of democratic self-government, what are we to make of Basque nationalism or the separatisms of the Northern League? Who, in fact, is the nation? Who is in and who is out? European integration, but also the larger forces of worldwide economic globalization and the movement of peoples and capital, information and technology, germs and news across national borders, is making us re-

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think these questions. Democracies should be judged not only by how they treat their members but by how they treat their strangers. The global politics of inclusion and exclusion, membership and the denial of membership, is facing not only Europe but all nation-states. I fail to see that the invocation of nationalism can help settle these questions.

Europe is undergoing a fascinating experiment. For some this experiment is a "grand illusion" (Tony Judt); for others, and I count myself among them, it recalls some of the hopes expressed by Immanuel Kant in his essay "Perpetual Peace." The European left should not harken after the discredited nationalisms of the past but use its imagination to think up new institutions of democratic self-determination for a postnational Europe. The establishment of Europe-wide political parties to compete with national parties; the encouragement of multilanguage newspapers, television stations, cultural, educational, and scientific projects; the formulation of a common policy of social and economic rights (a European charter of human rights already exists); the democratic regulation of the political rights of third world nationals and permanent residents—these would be steps in the right direction. ●

SEYLA BENHABIB is professor of government and a senior research fellow at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University.

Michael Rustin

As I was reading the advance proofs of David Miller's article, the World Cup was being transmitted from France and shown on British television, to huge popular interest. This spectacle offered the choice of two different kinds of national identification. Many fans in England, while supporting the English national team, were also celebrating the performances of the great footballers from rival European teams who now play for English Premier League clubs during the regular season. But at the same time, some Englishmen were in Marseilles for the match between England and Tunisia, waving the Union Jack and beating the hell out of any Tunisians they could find, as well as battling with the French riot police. Far-right political groups seemed to be the main inspiration of these rioters, as they were for the gangs of German fans engaged in more organized violence in Lens.

The emergence of these different styles of national and European identification in the important symbolic space of sport make David Miller's equation of nation with the quest for democracy and social justice seem one-dimensional. Just as Michael Walzer has usefully distinguished between the ideas of simple and complex equality, so in Europe we now need concepts of simple and complex nationality to enable us to work out what identifications we should support.

These complexities are not only evident in sports. Travel around the continent has greatly increased, and European nationals, especially the young, now feel more comfortable in each other's cities. National identities within the British Isles are undergoing an even more important form of complication, made possible by the larger political containment that the European Union (EU) provides. The growing modernization and secularization in the Republic of Ireland has in part been made possible by its membership in the EU, which has helped Ireland attract both public and private investment and has given it a context in which it can escape its long relationship of simultaneous dependence on, and antagonism toward, the United Kingdom. These changes in the south have contributed greatly to the emerging peace settlement in Northern Ireland. As the republic has become a more tolerant, and cosmopolitan society, its representation as a reactionary threat to Protestant freedoms has come to seem increasingly out of touch with reality. It was becoming absurd to conduct a latent civil war over the question of Irish citizenship when it was highly probable that within five years everyone within the

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British Isles would be paying their bills in Euros.

The devolution of power to Scotland and Wales has had a similar significance in dismantling, or pluralizing, a unitary British national identity that in fact has amounted chiefly to the imposition of a southern English hegemony on everyone else in these islands. It is even possible (though I think it's unlikely) that Scotland will be pushed by the Scottish Nationalists to opt for full national independence, but without this bringing about the grave crisis it would once have done. This is because the significance of "independence" will already have been greatly diminished by common membership in the European Union.

Nor is this erosion of national identities occurring only within the British Isles. Postwar West Germany was constructed under American constitutional influence as a federal state, and has remained so; Spain's democratic modernization since 1974 has been achieved on federalist principles; and France and Italy have also been moving toward more regionalized political arrangements. The European Union has been favorable to the relative autonomy of its regions, because it has encouraged flows of investment, which, though formally controlled by national governments, can only be won if regions are given some autonomous scope to bid for them. The union has sought to strengthen its own institutions by setting up bargaining relations with regional and city governments, which national governments have tolerated as the price for gaining access to these funding streams. Glasgow's modern revival was given a large boost when it was designated "European City of Culture" for 1990 and received EU funding to promote its unexpected cultural role.

European nation-states were not created for the purpose of pursuing the goals of democracy and social justice. They were initially the creations of the bourgeoisie, which wanted to establish the conditions for free-market economies and to sweep away the trade restraints that dynastic political boundaries imposed. In most of Western Europe, nation-states preceded mass democracy, sometimes by centuries, and certainly they long predated any concerted pursuit of social justice. In Eastern Europe, post-1918, there was a brief convergence of nationalist and democratic impulses, but it was short-lived, and the era of interwar nationalism was notably authoritarian and undemocratic in most nations, with Czechoslovakia as the principal exception. Ernest Gellner was essentially correct in suggesting that the nation-state was the cultural and political container which allowed the development of commercial and industrial societies.

It is true that democracy and social justice emerged, once nation-states were established, as the popular response to these new configurations of power. It is also true that liberals and the left have often sought to turn national identifications to the advantage of progressive concepts of citizenship. With democracy, as T.H. Marshall predicted, have come wider claims to social and economic justice. But in central and eastern Europe, subsequent to the fall of the Berlin Wall, nationalism has been no guarantee of democracy. It is the European Union that now requires that nations must be political democracies as a condition of membership.

Even if one once believed in the historic mission of the nation-state to be the container of political and social democracy, it is hard to envisage this as a practical political option today. We may be able to make history, but still not in circumstances of our own choosing. The key circumstance in this case is that the optimum political container for modern capitalist economies is now considerably larger in geographic and demographic scale than the nation-state. That is why there is a single European market, why restraints on movements of capital and labor within Europe have been swept aside, why a single European currency is coming into existence, and why major corporations must now integrate their systems of production and marketing on a continental if not a transcontinental scale, if they are to thrive. David Miller is right to predict that the Conservatives will eventuallly be forced by big business to abate their little-Englander hostility to Europe. Most on the left now accept the inevitability of economic integration, and opposition to the EU is now mainly the cause

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of the flag-waving nationalist right.

Just as the question of the nation-state soon became, for liberals and the left, what kind of nation state, so the question of Europe is now not whether we are to have European integration, but European integration of what kind? Many on the left support greater integration because they see hopes of institutionalizing the various postwar European national systems of social protection as a generic European model, through such devices as the European Social Charter and the European Convention on Human Rights. This represents a Europe-wide commitment to what David Miller calls social justice, but what in the European Union these days is more often referred to as "social inclusion."

The implicit antagonist of this concept of a "social Europe" is an unregulated global capitalism, dominated by the United States, and ideologically reinforced by Thatcherism. There are, of course, no guarantees that the European Union will succeed in defending its "third way"—its mélange of social and Christian democracy—against these pressures. The EU's sternest regulations are designed to enforce a competitive market economy across Europe and leave social policy and welfare largely to its national governments. But it seems unlikely that a fragmented Europe of nation-states, *each* separately vulnerable to attacks on its currency, is going to be better able to defend welfare regimes than states whose social commitments can be shored up by their membership in a powerful European Union. Just as the second stage of the European nation-state saw the struggle for political democracy and social and economic rights, so the second phase of the European Union, which has the great advantage of having begun on a democratic political basis, must be the struggle for Europe-wide guarantees of social and economic rights.

This does not require the development of a supra-European nationality, about which David Miller is right to be skeptical. Indeed, the emerging European Union may enable us to break with the nation-state's typical equation of cultural identity with political citizenship. It seems that we can both be political citizens of the European Union (enjoying the right to work in any EU country, protection from the European Court, and so on), and also identify culturally with whatever national, regional, or ethnic community we please.

In *On Toleration*, Michael Walzer discussed a paradoxical virtue of multinational empires: although they provided few political rights, they tolerated cultural diversity. These empires were not that interested in what customs their citizens practiced, so long as they obeyed the law and did not resist or rebel against central political authority. They tolerated collective cultural diversity while doing little to enforce individual freedoms against local constraints. Unitary nation-states were the reverse: they sometimes defended individual political rights but were usually hostile to local cultural traditions.

Walzer briefly discussed the European Union as perhaps the prototype of a new way of combining cultural tolerance with political citizenship. His intuitions on this are prescient. The European Union has the chance of becoming the equivalent of a democratic multinational state, ruled not by a dynasty like the empires, but by a constitutional settlement that establishes basic rules of political and economic practice, while also allowing considerable devolution of powers to member nations and to regions or cities within them.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe, and the European Union's doctrine of "subsidiarity" (powers must be devolved to the lowest feasible jurisdictional level) provide strong foundations for such a pluralist concept of citizenship and identity. It is a strength, not a weakness, of the European Union, that geographical mobility within Europe is limited by linguistic and cultural differences: it is good fortune for a continent to embody such diversity within so small a space. Although these cultural differences are slowly diminishing under the impact of consumer culture, mass tourism, and so on, they are likely to remain substantial for the foreseeable future, and new forms of differentiation are likely to emerge as the European Union on the one hand expands its boundaries, and on the other hand gives ethnic minorities (from Asia, North Africa, and the Caribbean) the space to evolve their

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own forms of identity.

The world has never before seen a democratic political federation on this scale. We can envisage, for the first time, a reasonable balance between universal guarantees and a creative cultural diversity. Although the international community is far from being able to guarantee these rights of citizenship worldwide, it seems that it is becoming feasible, perhaps as the forerunner of a future international order, in the continent of Europe. Clinging to the residues of the British nation-state seems to be the most pessimistic and unimaginative of options, in this promising situation. ●

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David Miller Replies

ALTHOUGH Seyla Benhabib, Michael Rustin, and I seem to occupy contrasting positions on the European question, I am not sure how deep our differences really are. We agree that the EU is an important new departure in transnational cooperation, one that can help to counteract the worst excesses of global capitalism. We agree, too, that national identities in this region are becoming more complex and multilayered than they once were. So this is not a battle between reactionary nationalism and progressive internationalism. Our disagreements are more subtle than that, more to do with the shape of the new Europe and the balance to be struck between national politics and European cooperation. How far is it desirable to have a single monetary and fiscal policy across Europe (neither Benhabib nor Rustin declare their hand on the question of the single currency)? How far should the harmonization of social rights and social policy throughout Europe proceed? And should we be trying to create a real (not merely nominal) form of European citizenship that will eventually displace national citizenship as the primary form of political membership? These are the real issues, not to be sidestepped by simple oppositions.

I believe that much enthusiasm on the left for further installments of European integration is inspired by fear of global capitalism, by the increasing difficulty national governments have in regulating movements of capital and pursuing redistributive and labor-friendly policies in the face of international competition. The EU, so the argument goes, has much greater leverage here, simply because of the size of the market it can control. One may have doubts about this claim (because the European market represents only a slice of the world market, firms can still put pressure on EU member states by threatening to move their operations outside), but let's suppose it is broadly true. We are then confronted by the following dilemma: we need high-level political institutions to control global capitalism, but it is correspondingly harder at that level to create the kind of political consensus and political will needed to make the control effective. In my article I expressed strong doubts about whether democracy on a European scale was possible, and Benhabib's response to this is to concede that currently there is a serious democratic deficit and then to say that it would be a good thing if we could overcome it. Of course it would, but my point was that there are severe obstacles—especially cultural and linguistic divisions—that make the emergence of genuine European citizenship very unlikely. So we should aim instead for strong forms of citizenship within nation-states and collaboration between states where they have interests in common.

I also doubt whether harmonization of social policy across states is necessarily a good thing. Certainly there are basic rights that every state should respect, but beyond that, nations should be free to pursue policies that reflect their own cultural and political traditions. Diversity has much to recommend it here, not least because countries can learn from one another's experiments. There is currently in

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Europe a broad division over how best to respond to unemployment caused by technical change. One view is that we should be seeking to make people more employable by spending more on education and vocational training. The other view is that we should subsidize a lower level of employment (part-time work, earlier retirement, and so on) by providing people with income not linked to their employment status (a universal and unconditional basic income is one version of this). Which strategy is best? We don't know, and we will find out only if each of them is tried in different places. But that can happen only if national governments have sufficient latitude in economic and social policy, and the centralizing tendencies of the EU are curtailed. ●

DAVID MILLER teaches political theory at Nuffield College, Oxford. He is the author of *On Nationality* and is working on a book on social justice.

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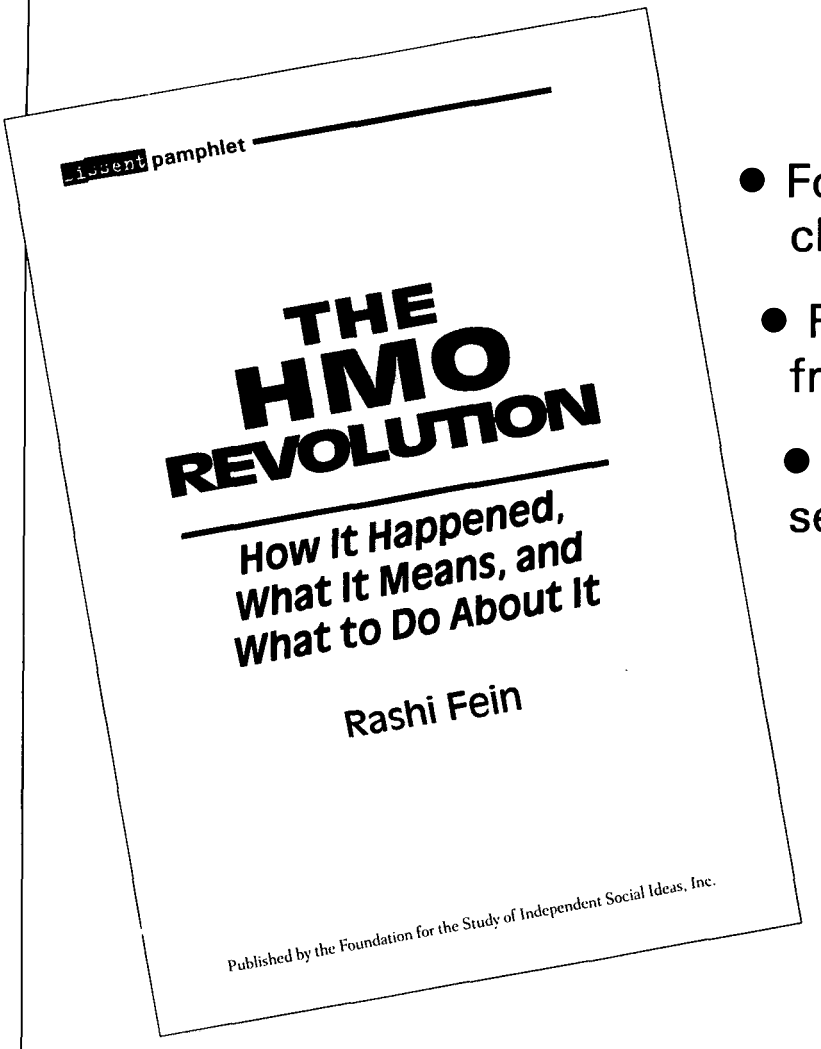
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Beyond Buying and Posing

Feminist Teen Magazines

Maxine Phillips

At least once a day I hear myself saying some version of the following to my two daughters, ages ten and thirteen: "We didn't have X when I was young." Depending on the situation, the next sentence will be, "And we got along just fine without it" or "I sure wish I'd had that when I was your age."

In the latter category are feminist magazines. As I remember them, the magazines of the fifties and early sixties aimed at girls were all about celebrities, looking good, being nice, and snaring a guy. My friends and I read them avidly. What would it have meant to receive a magazine that told me it was OK not to look like a movie star, that I could be a politician rather than a politician's wife, that asked why boys could wear pants to school and girls couldn't, a magazine that named—and questioned—a system so much a part of my life that it was as natural as the sunrise.

I had to wait until I was in my twenties for that experience, when I opened the premier issue of *Ms.* My daughters don't have to wait that long. They live in a vastly different culture, one in which feminism has deeply influenced their lives but, as Mary Pipher describes in *Reviving Ophelia*, one in which both the backlash against feminism and the ever-present devaluation of women puts adolescent girls at risk in ways very different from the girls of my generation.

The magazines I remember from my youth and their successors exist with essentially unchanged content (the lyrics have changed from don't kiss on the first date to don't have sex on the first date, but the tune is the same: get that date). My daughters and their friends read them avidly, and I hear myself saying, "At this stage of feminism how can they still print that stuff?"

Yet there are alternatives out there, struggling to compete in a culture that constantly promotes consumerism, commodifies sex, and reinforces girls' negative images of themselves.

Magazines Discussed in this Essay

New Moon, New Moon Publishing, P.O. Box 3620, Duluth, Minnesota 55803-3620. E-mail: newmoon@computerpro.com; Internet: http://www.newmoon.org. Published six times per year, $29. ***New Moon Network***, for adults, is a sixteen-page newsletter that is published six times per year for $25. A subscription to both publications costs $49.

Teen Voices, Women Express, Inc., P.O. Box 120-027, Boston, MA 02112-0027. E-mail: womenexp@teenvoices.com; Internet: http://www.teenvoices.com. Published quarterly, $20 per year; bulk rates available to organizations that serve teenagers.

New Moon, "The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams," claims to be "edited entirely by girls 8–14." Founded in 1993 by a husband-wife team in Minnesota, *New Moon* is a lyrical four-color glossy that packs a lot in about girls all over the world. The readers' letters and text are not broken up with as much art as in commercial magazines, and there is no outside advertising. An article on science crafts (make your own mobile) can co-exist with such pieces as "Menstruation Myths" or a first-person report from an adult who talked with residents of an orphanage in Romania. This article had an accompanying sidebar on NATO and former Warsaw Pact nations and some cultural information about Romania.

Each issue has a theme (for example, sci-

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ence; music and art; religion and spirituality; astronomy, astrology,and mythology; animals). Less than half the magazine is written by adults, and presumably all of it is voted on and edited by the all-girl editorial board. Luna, the magazine's guiding spirit, receives what elsewhere would be letters to the editor; asks readers questions ("What excites you about coming of age? How do you see yourself at age 18? 40? 75?" "What are your favorite myths? . . . Do you believe that stars affect your daily life?") listens; and dispenses wisdom. Girls are encouraged to write in and voice their opinions: ("What do you like about Barbie? What don't you like?"). In the "How Aggravating" column, readers talk about everything from their distaste at watching women Olympic figure skaters "skate in bikinis" to having to sit out recess because the school gives boys priority for the basketball court and only allows girls to use it if the boys agree.

Not all readers appreciate the openly feminist stance of the magazine. A disgruntled thirteen-year-old reader writes, "[I]t's the 1990s. Times have changed. Women are treated just as well as men now for the most part. . . .After reading some of the other girls' comments . . . I would like to ask—What's wrong with wearing make-up, looking good for a boy, and liking clothes?"

When the outrage at gender inequality comes from the girls it has the fresh "click" of understanding, as in a letter from a ten year old in Milwaukee: "I also want to thank all of the girls who wrote in about being sexually harassed and said that if anyone ever gets harassed they should tell someone. That was one of the only reasons I told my mom about my experience." But in the adults' contributions the "click" can be forced, as in a story about an eighteenth-century girl, sister to Emile, the son of a Madame Dupin who is writing a book on gender inequality. The fictional Louise's mother tells her that gender equality will be a long time coming and that "the deck is stacked in [Emile's] favor." "I know what you mean," Louise fumes. "Even the tutor acts like he's the only one who counts."

In fact, in the issues I looked at, the fiction by adults was less engaging and much more didactic than that by young people. Adults seem to care only about gender issues, for the wider political questions raised by some of the articles are not touched. I can understand that a fourteen year old in a Romanian orphanage might think her country would benefit from joining NATO, but the sidebar asks only "Who should belong to NATO?" not, "Why should NATO exist?" The magazine also betrays an occasional multicultural naiveté—most outrageously when it printed, with no further comment, claims that Iraqi women "can vote and hold office," and "President Saddam Hussein supports women's rights more than some Iraqi politicians."

Although it carries no outside advertising, *New Moon* is a mini-industry. Each issue has bound in it a sixteen-page catalog with "Resources for Schools, Girls' Groups, Libraries." The products range from those created for *New Moon* (stationery, posters, pins, stickers, clothing) to New Age-type dream journals, jewelry, and bath oils to books for both adults and girls. The intended audience, which includes educators, has money to spend.

A sibling newsletter, *New Moon Network*, speaks to adults about articles in *NM* and to issues on parents' and educators' minds. Plans are under way for a series of four books. In addition, the company recently acquired a multicultural feminist magazine for young adults called *HUES* (*Hear Us Emerging Sisters*).

Reading *New Moon* is like reading a junior *Ms.* without the sex and violence. It's won a lot of awards from, among others, the Parents' Choice Foundation, the National Women's History Project, the NOW Foundation, and the Educational Press Association of America. It makes me remember the first discovery of other times and other places. I like to read it, skimming the didactic parts. I've given it as a gift and not been asked to renew and I've told other mothers of daughters about it. They look at it, murmur approvingly, then say, "My daughter would never read it."

Somewhere there are 23,000 people with subscriptions, which can't all be unsolicited gifts from parents and grandparents. However, even with my unscientific sample of two, I can see what some of the problems are, and they

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go beyond naiveté and pedantry to the issues raised by the unhappy reader quoted above.

Girls are being pushed by the culture to "grow up" faster, so that there is a brief period, perhaps from eight to ten, when a girl might still be captivated by a magazine that doesn't deal with music, boys, clothes, makeup, and celebrities, but after that, unless she has strong support for alternatives, she wants to talk about what the other girls are talking about. Can any feminist magazine compete with the slick messages of the dominant media? How much is *New Moon* willing to compromise? Does it look a little too much like it's good for you rather than just plain good?

The rule of thumb about teen magazines seems to be that teen now starts around age ten, so that that age group is looking at *Teen* and *16*, while the twelve-to-fifteen year olds are looking at *YM (Young and Modern)*, formerly *Young Miss*; *Seventeen*; and the new *Teen People*, which is not targeted only to girls but certainly appeals to them. Anyone older is thumbing through *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*.

Just as I was trying to figure out how to promote a critical reading of *YM* ("Why don't we make a list of all the beauty products mentioned in the articles and then see if any of them are *not* advertised in this issue?"), *Teen Voices* appeared in my mail. The promotional letter suggested that I, as a feminist, might know a teenager for whom this magazine, written almost entirely by teens and purporting to cut across class and race lines, would be appropriate. Would I like to buy that teen a subscription?

Three faces, two of them teenagers of color, smiled out at me. The young woman in the center had braces. The one on the end had moles. I couldn't remember ever seeing such an obviously untouched photo on a magazine. The articles featured on the front included "The Way Out: Surviving Depression," "Top 10 Reasons Not to Shave," and "Life in Foster Care."

Inside were regular feature sections on racism (later changed to "cultural awareness"), sexual assault, health, arts and culture, media, and another country. This was the junior *Ms. with* sex and violence. Although it was a four-color glossy and had the same jumbled look to it as the mainstream teen magazines, there were few ads and the typefaces and colors gave it a low-budget look. Which it is. Founded in 1987 by two young women, Alison Amoroso and Christine Diamond, it is a not-for-profit magazine linked to an organization, Women Express, which runs programs in the greater Boston area for teenage women. It has 3,500 paid subscriptions, a lot of them bulk orders from organizations, and claims a readership of 70,000.

I sent in a check. The issues started to arrive.

No celebrities, makeovers, or articles on how to get a guy. The target audience is girls from ages twelve up, and it reflects the wide gap in interests that such an age range suggests. Teen immigrants talk about their countries and their lives; a sixteen-year-old writes about her mother's death from breast cancer (sidebars, written by adults, give information on teens and breast cancer and breast self-examination); two young poets write about their desire to run away; and a fourteen year old cautions against it, describing her life on the streets after running from an abusive home. Two teens from different families describe their homeschooling experiences and another talks about her transition from public school to homeschool and back; there is a feature on friendship; there is a lot of poetry, even a section for love poetry. There are critiques of society's obsession with weight and lots of reader input about eating disorders. Animal rights are covered. Lesbianism is mentioned. Readers send in reviews of books, music, and Web pages. One of Women Express's goals is to teach media literacy, so that in addition to pointing out in articles how the mass media treat women, *Teen Voices* asks readers to deconstruct an outrageous ad in every issue ("This ad bites because . . . ").

Almost every article is written by teens, but the sidebars with the background information, the names of organizations to contact, the books to read, and often some editorial comments come from adults. For instance, in a section on interracial dating a sixteen year old writes, "People say sometime in the future there will be a race war. If that does happen,

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we will have no one to blame but ourselves." The sidebar underneath is headlined, "Who says there is going to be a race war?" and asserts, "There is no need to passively accept other people's pessimistic (negative) attitudes about race relations. There has been great progress through this country's civil rights movements . . . . If everyone who reads *Teen Voices* joins the movement for civil rights—against all discrimination—we will be even closer to social and economic justice." As an adult and a parent I was glad to see the broader viewpoints, but I wondered if they might not seem too preachy to a young person.

"Okay, so we are sort of like your mom in that we think abstinence is best until you are much older and more physically and emotionally prepared to have sex," says the lead-in paragraph to a description of birth-control methods. A teen talked about scarring herself:

> Why don't people ask me how I feel about my scars? How do I feel about them? The slashes on my legs were self-abuse. The circular scar (on my arm, near the shoulder) is an expression of coming of age. I regret the day I slashed my leg, but smile every time I look at the circle on my arm.

Her description prompted sidebars that exceeded the length of her essay, offering multicultural perspectives on body modification and alternatives to scarring:

> Are you thinking about doing it because, as Addie writes, "I did not want to become a 'grown-up' and say, 'That's the way life is.' "

> Figure out what you think the definition of a grown-up is, then find adults who defy the stereotypes. Figure out why you like them and how they live their lives. There are great things about adulthood that don't include accepting the norms and conformity. You don't have to scar yourself to live the way you want to.

At times I found such an adult voice jarring despite its common sense and useful information.

This magazine is not aimed only at middle-class girls, and the voices in it come from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds. I like it, my older daughter likes it.

However, as I was writing this article and discussing it with her, this same daughter asked, "I know the stuff in *YM* is stupid, but I still want to read it. Why is that?"

New Moon and *Teen Voices* face the tension common to all alternative magazines of trying to reach the audience they believe is out there but not compromising their vision in order to attract the money to market themselves. Given the way that advertising drives content in mass-market magazines, it's doubtful that teen feminist magazines can ever be as trendy as their mainstream competitors and stay true to their visions if they accept the big-money ads. On the other hand, without money for promotion, which has to come from foundations or individuals, they can't reach whatever audience does exist.

On a still smaller scale are feminist zines like the *Jellybean* and *Wild Honey Pie* that are produced directly by individual adolescent women. These zines, which are generally xeroxed and have circulations in the low three figures, avoid moralizing and awkwardness; their idiosyncratic voices carry power. But this virtue is also their vice: they're unconnected to adult experience or wisdom. And with such tiny circulations, they make no pretense of challenging the cultural power of *YM* and *Seventeen*.

New Moon and *Teen Voices* may suffer from naiveté, uneven writing, preachiness, but they fill a need that I didn't know existed forty years ago. If these magazines had been in my mailbox then, would I have read them? Yes, and each for different reasons. *New Moon*, appealing to younger readers, speaks of a world in which it is possible for girls to combat injustice, dream big dreams, and live in harmony with others. It is an expansive, yet comforting, vision. *Teen Voices*, also committed to a better world, enters much less comfortable territory. It would have named the unseen and unknown for me, perhaps better prepared me for the world from which I had been sheltered. Today, when I can't shelter my children in the same way my parents did me, I'm glad these magazines are in our mailbox. ●

Maxine Phillips is the managing editor of *Dissent*.

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Up From Brownsville

Alfred Kazin: Life and Work

Joe Wood

If memoirs are always full of lies—and they always are—the measure of a good memoirist is how well she tricks us. Of course, all texts are slippery; it would be foolish to suggest that memoirists are amoral or immoral or evil. Often as not these "liars" shape their tales to drive home some larger point, deploying dubious strategies of "self-examination" to get at some greater meaning.

In some cases the greater meaning amounts to an aesthetic or political idea considered valuable by a group to which the memoirist belongs. Many examples of this can be found in the long tradition of the African-American memoir. On the contemporary scene, Maya Angelou has produced several separate accounts of her life; the progenitors of her books include the narratives of runaway slaves, Booker T. Washington's accommodationist *Up From Slavery* (ghostwritten, it should be noted, by a white journalist), and the various memoirs of W.E.B. Du Bois. All express a distaste for the unfairness of white supremacism, and all to a greater or lesser degree use their "I" to broadcast that distaste; whatever their worth, each seeks to function, after Du Bois's subtitle for his 1940 memoir *Dusk of Dawn*, as both "An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept" and an autobiography of an individual person.

How can a single tale serve both ends? This is where lying enters the picture. Malcolm X, for example, told his classic tale well enough for it to resonate as "the" story of black men in midcentury America, though *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* doesn't really give readers the precise details of his life. Most of the narrative is unapologetically "spun" to advertise the virtues of the Nation of Islam. Such issues bring us, improbably, to the memoirs of Alfred Kazin.

Alfred Kazin was an important writer to many people because he seemed to shoot straight and without apology. While literary critics such as Lionel Trilling spent lifetimes in anti-Semitic academies hobbled by the need to ape the WASPy manners of their associates, Kazin wrote his sweeping history of modern American literature, *On Native Grounds*, without the imprimatur of the academy. And as he grew older and more confident, he wrote about the world of literature with an unashamedly Jewish eye. Not only did Kazin begin to explain the putative Jewishness of his sensibility in numerous articles and in prefaces and forewords to other people's books, he tried to make Jewishness one of the main subjects of his various memoirs, including *A Walker in the City*, *Starting Out in the Thirties*, and *New York Jew*.

It makes sense to think of Kazin's memoirs as attempts, in varying degrees, to write the autobiography of a Jewish-American race concept. But this was not a simple task—and possibly not a task that Kazin wholeheartedly embraced. The memoirist's life was, after all, much more complicated than the cover-all description "Jewish" permits, and "Jewish" itself contains many contradictory meanings. In *Walker*, for example, Kazin the poor Jewish boy both yearns for a place as a man of letters and rhapsodizes over his Jewish home, Brownsville. Like all worlds, his Jewish world is made of differences. In a friend's neighborhood, "Jews who had made it into the middle class called themselves 'white,'" he recalls in the early pages of *New York Jew*, "and poor Jewish workers 'black.' My family was definitely black."

Even the title of his most ambitious memoir, *New York Jew*, suggests impatience with the confinement of the label; the name tells us

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Kazin knows he's more than a New York Jew, whatever *that* creature is! Yet before dispensing with the title and its obvious irony, readers might want to take pause: why did Kazin name the most sweeping account of his quite complicated life *New York Jew*?

THE ANSWER is impossible to determine. But now that the man is dead, and his memoirs have turned into final statements, and the story of this century's Jewish immigration and assimilation has become the stuff of myth—now that all this has happened, it's only right that we reconsider the principal memoir of that group's very faithful, if ambivalent, chronicler.

In *New York Jew*'s first chapters, Kazin frames his celebration of modernist literature with the contours of his own ethnic background.

> My subject [in *On Native Grounds*] had to do with the "modern" as democracy; with America itself as the modern; with the end of the nineteenth century as the great preparation: in lonely small towns, prairie villages, isolated colleges, dusty law offices, national magazines, and provincial "academies" where no one suspected that the obedient-looking young reporters, law clerks, librarians, teachers would turn out to be Willa Cather, Robert Frost, Sinclair Lewis, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore. The new literature was being created inside an old century—proud, stormy, yet elegant. The elegance was still inside those great halls of the Library. . . . Even the spacious twin reading rooms, each two blocks long, gave me a sense of the powerful amenity that I craved for my own life, a world of power in which my own people had moved about as strangers.

It is easy to see, and share, the joy Kazin felt at reading, reading, reading "the new literature." Certainly love of modernism fills the many pages of his literary criticism, from *On Native Grounds* to *God and the American Writer*. But in this passage Kazin is also hinting at a rather murky unease. It is to be found in the last quoted sentence: "Even the spacious twin reading rooms, each two blocks long, gave me a sense of the powerful amenity that I craved for my own life, a world of power in which my own people had moved about as strangers."

Let's remind ourselves, for a second, of where to place young Alfred Kazin on the American demographic map. He completed *On Native Grounds* in 1942. The title was perfect. Kazin was a son of East European immigrants who arrived in the first decades of the century. Like the many other Jews who made up America's most massive wave of immigration to date, Kazin's family had barely landed before a substantial segment of U.S. "whites" managed to roll up the welcome mat. Kazin's parents—a house-painter father and a seamstress mother—were not the wealthy sort of immigrants favored by today's policy. They settled in Brownsville, Brooklyn, which was a ghetto. Their children went to public schools, which were not as good as some memories claim. Between 1938 and 1942 Alfred traveled to the great halls of the New York Public Library and waded in the new literature, a literature in early flow at the same time as his family's arrival.

It is obvious that the new literature embraced by Alfred Kazin was, in a sense, a reflection of the America of his birth. This America was on the rise. In *On Native Grounds* he writes:

> Our modern literature in America is at bottom only the expression of our modern life in America. . . . Our modern literature was rooted in those dark and still little-understood years of the 1880's and 1890's when all America stood suddenly, as it were, between one society and another, one moral order and another, and the sense of impending change became almost oppressive in its vividness. It was rooted in the drift to the new world of factories and cities, with their dissolution of old standards and faiths; in the emergence of the metropolitan culture that was to dominate the literature of the new period . . . But above all was it rooted in the need to learn what the reality of life was in the modern era.

That reality was as complicated as can be. Forces on the side of revolution often wore the same uniforms as forces on the side of reaction. The forces of reaction would include the triumphant stranglehold of industrial capital on the American scene, the triumphant con-

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solidation of American financial and military power in this hemisphere and in parts of the rest of the world, the triumphant establishment of Jim Crow in the South, and casual segregation in most other areas of the country.

Certainly the maelstrom of American modernization depended on the labor of the latest wave of new people. Not surprisingly, the big cultural shifts recorded by modern writers—urbanization, for example, and the turn away from Victorian gentility—were simultaneously pushed along by *and* represented by the new immigrants. The immigrants were in this sense quintessentially modern.

And not. For in the American context they also represented an alien force, and this cut at least two ways. The largely poor, largely Jewish huddled masses were an easy scapegoat for some of the many social ills associated with modernization. They were also the "Old World" strangers who dirtied "our" cities and threatened "our" racial stock. This reaction eventually resulted in the cessation of the wave by means of the racist Immigration Act of 1924.

I SHOULD RETURN to the subject at hand: the new literature, and Kazin's feelings about the new literature.

> There is a terrible estrangement in this writing, a nameless yearning for a world no one ever really possessed, that rises above the skills our writers have mastered and the famous repeated liberations they have won to speak out plainly about the life men lead in America. All modern writers, it may be, have known that alienation equally well, and for all the reasons that make up the history of the modern spirit; have known it and learned to live with it as men learn to live with what they have and what they are. But what interested me here was our alienation *on* native grounds—the interwoven story of our need to take up our life on our own grounds, and the irony of our possession.

What does the concluding line of this passage describe if not the modern condition experienced by Kazin and his peers—the children of the new arrivals?

But thre is also something that Kazin's preface to *On Native Grounds* doesn't address: the *peculiar* strangerness to which I've pointed. Some of the most brilliant literary moderns denied Jews a share of America—even of "the irony of our possession" of America. In the opening pages of *New York Jew*, Kazin informs us that proto-modern Henry Adams was wildly anti-Semitic, and he reminds us that T. S. Eliot wrote these words in *After Strange Gods*: " . . . reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable." Kazin calls Ezra Pound "one of the original poets and master critics of the twentieth century, *the* writer most responsible for making modernism in literature part of our lives." Then he lists some of Pound's wartime utterances: "Politically and economically the U.S. has had economic and political syphilis for the past 80 years, ever since 1862. And England has had economic syphilis for 240 years." "That any Jew in the White House should send American kids to die for the private interests of the scum of the English earth . . . and the dregs of the Levantine . . . " These pronouncements were made just after Kazin had completed *On Native Grounds*.

Kazin tries to explain his feelings about Pound in a few remarkable paragraphs, condensed only slightly here:

> The voice was probably not influencing anybody. It was not like Hitler's. It was not Pound's influence I dreaded. It was his witchlike instinct for the hate buried in the age, coming to the surface in the Warsaw ghetto and the ovens of Treblinka. . . . He had this mad gift for personalizing history and for making other persons speak as History. I, Ezra Pound, speaking from Europe for the American heritage. I tell you how to read, what to think. "Don't start a pogrom—an old-style killing of small Jews. That system is no good whatever. Of course, if some man had a stroke of genius, and could start a pogrom up at the top, there might be something to say for it."
>
> Small Jews. Little Jews. Pound was the voice of the public whirlwind. Even if I had been able to explain Pound to them, my father and mother would never have understood how one man could be possessed by this much belief in himself. That was the trouble with "small

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> Jews." I saw them, all through the terrible war years of the Holocaust and after, in the image of my mother and father—people of the past, living in the past, caught up in a flame of totalitarian revolution that existed solely to keep *itself* aflame. They would never understand this or fully credit it even when they were being rounded up. And soon it would emerge, as our brother Kafka had said, that "not the murderer but the victim is guilty." Pound himself was to say after the war that no man named Ezra could be an anti-Semite. And that he had not known of the gas chambers.
>
> But I did. And I, too, could personalize History. The line-up was always before my eyes. I could imagine my father and mother, my sister and myself, our original tenement family of "small Jews," all too clearly—fuel for the flames, dying by a single flame that burned us all up at once. Would we, too, die because we could not understand where our murderers came from? What they wanted of us?
>
> Years after the war, from her children in Israel, I heard in detail of how my aunt refused to flee with everyone else into the forest. "Maybe it is God's will?" she had wondered. She was shot on her doorstep.

A great book hides in this set of paragraphs—perhaps several books. The book I am most interested in would explore the ways in which Jewishness was an issue for both Pound and Kazin. That is, it would address the question of who gets to personalize *American* history, and how the quintessentially modern newcomers faced a battle over becoming anything more than strangers to "the American heritage." "Even in death," Kazin writes bitterly, "the Jews were an 'anomaly,' a contradiction to the great 'unifying' tendencies of modern life and revolution."

It may be worth mentioning that I don't think the contradiction between being quintessentially modern and American and quintessentially alien is a function simply of Jewishness. Many of the leading practioners of the modern tendency in European literature, after all, were Jewish, and some of the German Jews who had arrived on the American scene earlier had gained secure footing here. And it is easy to contest the idea that even the new "small Jews" represented "people of the past." But the Jewishness of the poor strangers mattered a lot.

THERE IS, I think, enough in Kazin's *New York Jew* to suggest both a desire to use his own life to relate this story of the Jews in America, and a powerful revulsion from that approach. Kazin's first gestures toward examining modernity as a Jew swiftly shift into a gossipy discussion of life among the modernists. Full flight from the matter is achieved shortly after Kazin announces his deep admiration for Delmore Schwartz's most famous short story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities."

> [It] was straight, beautiful, haunting. It was a little masterpiece that used up a man's whole life even before he had lived it. It was the greatest fable I was ever to read of "our experience." It was the one work of Delmore Schwartz's life that had the power of a dream, and it remains with me as if I had dreamed it myself. Delmore was never again to bring out with such precision what it was to be a marked man, under a curse and wolfishly alone.

There is something weird about this lamentation for Delmore. The weirdness, I think, is located in the words Kazin chooses at the passage's end: Schwartz "was never again to bring out with such precision what it was to be a marked man, under a curse and wolfishly alone."

Let me back up. Kazin begins the passage calling Schwartz's story the greatest fable of "our experience"; though shrouded in quotation marks, "our experience" plainly refers to the experience of second-generation Jewish immigrants in America. Schwartz is "Brooklyn's best, nailed down. But from his cross he shrieked the most brilliant things, the most scathing things, excitedly analyzing a passage by 'my king, James Joyce,' and, like a mad shuttlecock, flying at anyone who saw less beauty in his favorite texts than he did." Kazin notes Schwartz's suffering Jewish characters, the Shenandoah Fishes and Hershey Greens. "Such names piled on each other became funnier than Groucho's J. Worthington Silverstein." But "Delmore could not laugh anything off. He practiced 'irony' as if this famous liter-

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ary strategy of the time was a Jew's only defense. Of course he could not see the joke. He was the drama." Kazin goes on to call "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" "the single most beautiful thing [Schwartz] was ever able to write, the classic story of the Jewish son unable to escape the history represented by his family . . . "

But then the memoirist shakes his head and performs a complete about-face. At the end of his life, Schwartz, he says, was "still trying to prove the injustice that was everywhere being practiced against him." Kazin sighs:

> "A poet shouldn't be that unhappy," Auden said with derision, looking at the photograph on Delmore's book, *Summer Knowledge*. . . . [Schwartz] would never lose himself in that dream of a totally other world that becomes to the eye of genius the only real world. Delmore could be maddening, but he never relaxed into the full madness of art.

I suspect that this tendency in Schwartz's writings—a lonesome inability to cut himself from the web of anti-Semitism, to think beyond the apparent contradiction between his Jewishness and the often anti-Semitic modernism he embraced—is precisely what Kazin does not want his own life to become.

Or his memoir. *New York Jew* attempts to tell the story of Kazin's individual life, with a dash of thinking about Jewishness, but with a lot of talk about white New York's largely Jewish intelligentsia. The book fully, even indulgently, immerses itself in the dream of a New York literary life represented so wonderfully in the very beginning of the book. Setting the backdrop of that dream were the non-Jewish American masters. Kazin recounts the details of his love of T.S. Eliot and Hart Crane and the considerably lesser Edmund Wilson. In fact Kazin spends pages and pages on Wilson, showing readers pointedly that Wilson was not an anti-Semite. Let me remind you why Kazin spends so much time on those modernists:

> My subject had to do with the "modern" as democracy; with America itself as the modern; with the end of the nineteenth century as the great preparation. . . . Even the spacious twin reading rooms, each two blocks long, gave me a sense of the powerful amenity that I craved for my own life, a world of power in which my own people had moved about as strangers.

Modern writers like Wilson represented the American insiders, the occupants of the great halls. The Jewish intellectuals on whom Kazin reports—and whom Wilson embraced—were the strangers in their midst. Yet not until *New York Jew*'s final chapter does the memoirist really take up again the interesting contradiction of the Jews' strangerness in modern America, which in my African-American eyes—the eyes of a writer whose work owes everything to the marvelous and slippery witness of his enslaved ancestors—was the book's promise.

WHO CAN blame Kazin for not pursuing the question? He was trying to tell the story of his life, after all, and in pursuing the question he would have condemned the narrative to the corridors of spokesmanship walked by the black slaves. Or perhaps the issue is more simple: the story of the Jews is precisely not the story Kazin wanted to "bend" his life story to tell. And I shouldn't try to make him . . . and I shouldn't wish he had.

Surely I can say that I disagree with Kazin's typically modernist feelings about art. The question of whether art is ruined by "sociology" or resistance to oppression was, in 1978, when *New York Jew* appeared, not new. It had been taken up by white modernists as diverse as Granville Hicks, T.S. Eliot, and Edmund Wilson. It had also been debated by modernists such as James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray. Mostly these black writers discussed the rules by which fiction should or should not operate. They did not all agree, so it cannot be said that there was one modernist position on literature. But one particular position—or resistance to it—long defined critical appraisal of, for example, African-American literature, often in these terms: is the work universal?

The debate has usually exempted the memoir, which, although considered a literary genre—how could one consider *The Autobi-*

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ography of Frederick Douglass, for example, anything else—nearly always gets read in the light of its most obvious ancestor, the slave narrative. In discussing Schwartz, Kazin voiced the impatience with "protest" literature evinced by modern criticism's dominant, often anti-Marxian, strains. Was he also feeling the effects of this allergy when setting his own memoir down to paper? Did he tell himself he had to make his memoir "literary" and not a sociological narrative—or a "black" narrative?

I can only guess. I met Alfred Kazin once, after a talk he gave at a local college. The talk was very smart but he made a comment during the question-and-answer period about a "black beggar" who panhandled near his apartment building. I asked Kazin why he found the blackness of the beggar important enough to mention. He said I should meet him for coffee at a luncheonette near his house.

I found the man kind and utterly charming. Most of our visit was spent discussing *Light in August* and then *The Sound and the Fury*, which we both admired. I told him I love Faulkner's work despite Faulkner. We talked a little about visiting Brownsville, the neighborhood in Brooklyn where he grew up. Kazin said he couldn't do it "without an Uzi." We did not talk about what I considered his evasiveness in *New York Jew*. Now I wish I'd asked him why he wanted to tell readers his story and why he thought it important enough to write again and again.

He even published his notebooks. Long anticipated, they promised in raw form the passion with which Kazin consumed American literature, and the unvarnished observations beneath the fine writerliness he demonstrated in works like *A Walker in the City*. But I must admit I also thought that the notebooks might ironically reveal more about the story of this century's American Jews than the polished individual literary life story he had so sedulously stuck to.

A Lifetime Burning in Every Moment was the name given the notebooks, the last of Kazin's self-remembrances. Too often old grudges and a gradual interest in spirituality haunt the entries—his selections and revisions are marked with renamings and out-and-out omissions and self-serving repetitions, the handiwork of a cantankerous old age. There are revelations about lifelong difficulties of maintaining confidence and of recent bad health. Near the last of the entries Kazin gets more and more preoccupied with the Holocaust and, inevitably, death. He seems concerned whether anything he says matters anymore, and whether he'll be remembered at all.

But the volume—which includes notes toward all his memoirs—does little to elucidate the dialectical process Kazin sketched in the beginning of *New York Jew*. Reading the new collection alone you would hardly know that the tension between Jewishness and American modernism was ever his concern at all. Edmund Wilson, who in *New York Jew* had a major role as a WASPy modernist who *wasn't* anti-Semitic, the guy who helps "legitimate" the talented Jewish writers in his midst, barely appears in the book.

In fact, Kazin is so self-assuredly Jewish throughout his life, according to the published notebooks, that the kind of fealty he showed Wilson in *New York Jew* seems impossible. Which sort of confirms that Kazin stayed around long enough to witness a major movement in American letters and democracy. Jews became regular features of the "world of power" he craved when he first started out.

TIMES CHANGE. How much harder today is it to be a modern man of letters when letters have turned to e-mail and disappear with the press of a silent key. And "man" has really turned into human, and so woman, and the elegant nineteenth century is, as it was, no more. There is little swimming in modernism these days. Also the smallness of the "literary" pool has been found out. Though we, too, might find heroes in the writings and the character of people like Melville or Adams or Howells or James or Hemingway, we now know—if we are to make sense of today's writing—we must find out about Bellow, Mailer, Roth (both Henry and Philip), and Sontag, to mention a few, and Douglass, Hurston, Du Bois, and Weldon Johnson, to mention a few others, or Larsen and Barnes and Chesnutt or Morrison or Reed, to name a few more, and in addition there are the Africans and the Asians

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and the South Americans and Europeans: you get the point. There is so much to read, and to see. There are important films to enjoy and take "seriously" because suddenly much more is *important*, so that "literature" understood as a relatively small set of books one has been told are important, the consumption of which through some alchemic process transforms the reader into a "cultured person"—that "culture" is ever more plainly not the *only* valuable culture. Of course this was the case even in the century's first years when Kazin's east European Jewish parents set down their baggage on these shores.

The point is that Kazin's silence on the matter of the second generation's trail from contradiction to citizen is not simply his own fault. If the memoirist missed a big chance by not fleshing out his observations about Jewishness and modernism, he did so largely because his sensibility was shaped by his times. The narrow ideas about what was worth paying attention to, and writing about, defined Kazin's vision, helped give it the first-class standing to which he aspired. Alas, today Kazin's writing, like the yellowing paper on which it was printed, turns old despite the writer's modernist intentions . . . and it ends up telling us a great deal of "sociology" about the Jews in twentieth-century America.

In his literary criticism Kazin never grappled with the literature of nonwhite America, and this failure puts a big hole in his lifelong attempts to explain American literature. Although the critic's blindness in this regard is understandable, as I've suggested, Kazin the memoirist's steady failure to comment on the civil-rights movement is less immediately comprehensible. The movement certainly affected his life, and judging from the output of the generally left-liberal intellectual circles he was a part of, was a subject he often discussed. Nevertheless Kazin the writer ignored it, and as he grew older, wrote with increasing hostility about blacks. One could almost forget that he once called his own family "black."

But only almost, for therein lies the key to the cabinet. With the publication of his notebooks, Kazin *did* succeed in writing the autobiography of a race concept, and it is the story of how the children of turn-of-the-century immigrants embraced whiteness.

Of course, *Lifetime*'s achievement is presaged in the earlier memoirs. In *Walker*, Kazin's honesty was commendable:

> We were the end of the line. We were the children of the immigrants who had camped at the city's back door, in New York's rawest, remotest, cheapest ghetto, enclosed on one side by the Canarsie flats and on the other by the hallowed middle-class districts that showed the way to New York. "New York" was what we put last on our address, but first in thinking of the others around us. They were New York, the Gentiles, America; we were Brownsville—Brunzvil, as the old folks said—the dust of the earth to all Jews with money, and notoriously a place that measured all success by our skill in getting away from it. So that when the poor Jews left, *even* Negroes, as we said, found it easy to settle on the margins of Brownsville. . . .

This attitude hardens later on. In *New York Jew* Kazin reflected on his parents' situation in the 1950s.

> My parents still lived in the same Brownsville tenement. News of the big money had not reached this house painter and this "home" dressmaker. They were as poor and isolated from America-at-large as the day they had met. They lived where they had always lived, and more and more they lived without hope. But now they were surrounded by poor blacks more than by poor Jews . . . .Brownsville was a foreign country now, a forbidden country to prospering Jews who had once lived there. It was a poison spot on the New York map even to the hundreds and thousands of blacks from the South wearily making it into the ghetto vacated by the Jews. Walking back into the country of my birth, I felt separated from everything except my youth.

Note how, in these accounts, Jews who "measured all success by our skill in getting away from [Brownsville]" turn into "the prospering Jews who once lived there." What once was a gentle slap at a rather innocuous form of poor-Jewish self-hatred gets partially transformed into muted applause for Jewish-American industriousness. That applause is largely the product of this sentence: "[Brownsville]

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was a poison spot on the New York map even to the hundreds and thousands of blacks from the South wearily making it into the ghetto vacated by the Jews." Keep in mind how in the first passage, "*even* Negroes, as we said, found it easy to settle on the margins of Brownsville . . . " In neither passage are the blacks fellow poor people who share a desire for the American dream; they represent the blackness everybody wanted to discard. Of course, the poignancy of the idea that "even" blacks would want to move turns on their wanting to get away from blackness and not simply poverty. This would be fine if Kazin recognized Brownsville's cyclicality: poor blacks wanted to become middle class just as poor Jews did. But he doesn't. He also fails to complicate the second passage (as he had the first) by pointing out the racism of the fleeing Jews. Instead he naturalizes this motive. For in not getting out, Kazin's poor parents are no longer "black"—they have become whites isolated in alien territory. Kazin, a child of "black" foreigners, bemoans the loss of *his* America to black "foreigners"! Is it too much to say that this finally explains why the "black" in black beggar was important?

Any doubts are swept away by *Lifetime*'s naked contempt for "the blacks." Nowhere in this book does the author ever mention his family's so-called blackness; the author's early references to Negroes inform readers how easily he'd embraced his own American whiteness. In England a few years after the war, the memoirist runs into a truly outraged antiracist. "In the train to London, corridors dripping water, a fashion buyer lady who travels all the time between London and Liverpool confronted me with 'your Negroes.' Wanted to know if because of their oppression they are allowed to pay less income tax than other Americans." Kazin's contempt for the questioner gleams barely below the surface. By the book's later chapters he scrapes that surface away.

> On TV, old newsreel shots of Martin Luther King Jr. rallying blacks in Chicago, trying to enter Cicero against its bigots. Detroit burning. King overheard at one point "I'm tired, I'm tired of . . . ." Oh, brother! On this everlasting subject, we're all tired. Even American liberals do not love blacks, enforce toleration for the sake of civic peace. After all, one Civil War was enough!
>
> But the grinding daily sorrow, confusion, bitterness of the black up against white suspicion and fear! Forcing the rest of us against our will into the mystery and history of perpetual victims—Chicago, Haiti, Zaire, South Africa—connected with this race of races. How did so many allow themselves to be enslaved in the first place?

The words are thankfully raw, much more raw than anything he writes on the difficulties of Jewishness and American modernism—and what telling rawness! "How did so many allow themselves to be enslaved in the first place?" Kazin's liberal frustration fixes his place among the whites, obliterating the demographic categories of his youth. Just as Kazin in *New York Jew* left behind Delmore Schwartz and his wrestling with the contradictions of modern Jewishness, Kazin in *Lifetime* forgets the lessons in victimization taught by the Shoah in his embrace of whiteness. He has discarded completely the ambiguous strangeness of being a "black" foreigner.

Surely Kazin the memoirist was not aware of the degree of these antipathies. In fact, the further he moved from remembering his own upbringing, the more effective is his witness, paradoxically, of whiteness. And of middle-classness. For in describing his working-class family as "black," Kazin did also say "poor." The move into whiteness silently documents a move from the working class into the middle-class ranks of power, the power he craved early on.

It could be argued that I am reading too much into Kazin's writings. I hear the reader now: *Alfred Kazin was writing about Alfred Kazin's life, and he was a guy who loved American literature, and he had more facets than Jewishness*, etc. And of course you are right.

There is, however, a cranial space once called "the unconscious," to borrow a term from the psychologists. Perhaps this unconscious explains why Kazin's memoirs are more than a literary individual's account of his fantastic travels. Perhaps this unconscious is what turned Alfred Kazin into the kind of sto-

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ryteller ex-slave narrators once were. No matter his intentions, Kazin's work gives us, I think, a very good witness to the movement of Jewish immigrants from the quasi-white working class into the white middle class—and the effects of that movement on consciousness.

I CAME AWAY from my coffee with Alfred Kazin convinced that the man was a gentleman. He was very charming—a friend remarked that he could see why Kazin had been so convincing to so many paramours. Kazin was also very smart. I like to say we discussed Faulkner, but the truth is I mostly listened to him explain subtleties of *The Sound and the Fury*. I will not lie and tell you I remember precisely what he said, for I have packed away his thoughts. The few I trot out on the rare occasions when I discuss Faulkner now go by my name. The probable originator's anonymity is, I suspect, the mark of a good teacher.

I leave you with one of the last entries in Kazin's published notebooks:

A car bomb in Israel has murdered, burned, several young girls. Leading rabbis in Israel, including the former chief rabbi of the army, say that the Lord forbids the Jews to give up any part of the land given to them by God, so Jews are permitted to resist the army. Yesterday was Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Pope invited the chief rabbi to the Vatican for a special concert. Vulnerable to every fresh stab of pain at my back, I feel the torrent of murder, malice, race hatred, flooding me like an ocean of shit. And you want me to continue writing about Jews, Jews, Jews! But it is exactly this torrent of raw shocks, of "experience" at its most open and relenting, that tells me it is up to me to write about us as Jews, Jews, Jews.

No one more than Kazin wanted him to write about Jews, and because of his feeling I wished he'd written more directly about the Jewish stranger's road to whiteness and the middle class, and the battle over modernity, and America and its power, for these were Kazin the memoirist's true subjects. ●

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Is the Left Right?

Confessions from the Left

On the Pain, Necessity, and Joys of Political Renewal

By John D. Nagle

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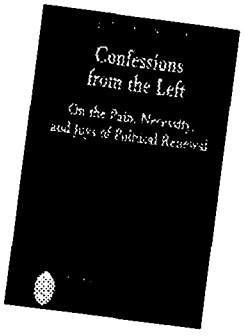

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by Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath
Free Press, 1998 288 pp $25

In "Literature and Science" (1883), a lecture delivered in America during the high noon of the Victorian culture wars, Matthew Arnold defended the study of Greek against utilitarian educational reformers and a newly assertive commercial class. "Literature may perhaps be needed in education," he imagines these Philistines conceding grudgingly, "but why on earth should it be Greek literature?" Because, he replies, we crave it.

> The instinct for beauty is set in human nature, as surely as the instinct for knowledge is set there, or the instinct for [right] conduct. If the instinct for beauty is served by Greek literature and art as it is served by no other literature and art, we may trust to the instinct of self-preservation in humanity for keeping Greek as part of our culture. We may trust to it for even making the study of Greek more prevalent than it is now. . . . So long as human nature is what it is, [its] attractions will remain irresistible.

Apparently human nature is no longer what it was. Around six hundred undergraduates currently major in classics each year at American colleges and universities, fewer than one in sixteen hundred new B.A.s—a figure that probably warrants designating them an endangered species. On the other hand, though unknown in Matthew Arnold's time, business majors now account for roughly a quarter of the graduating class. Greek, it would seem, is history.

So what? Is there still any reason to read the Greeks? Martha Nussbaum thinks so, and so do Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath. That, however, is nearly all they agree on. Nussbaum is upbeat, engaged, optimistic about the current academic scene; Hanson and Heath are angry, marginal, apocalyptic: Cassandras to her Pollyanna. Their new books make a curious pair.

Nussbaum champions cosmopolitanism: wider knowledge of the great variety of human cultures and institutions, enlivened by imaginative sympathy and brought to bear in rational and vigorous but mutually respectful deliberation about the common good, of which the Greeks were exemplary practitioners. Education for world citizenship is her theme. "A new and broader focus for knowledge is necessary to adequate citizenship in a world now characterized by complicated interdependencies. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the traditions of one half of the world, if we are to grapple well with the economic, political, and human problems that beset us." This means cultivating humanity. "Three capacities, above all," she writes, "are essential to the cultivation of humanity in today's world. First is the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions—for living what, following Socrates, we may call 'the examined life.' " The second is "an ability to see ourselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern." The third is "an ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes

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of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have."

As these examples suggest, Nussbaum is prone to platitude—she writes like a dean or a foundation officer or the chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. No one could disagree with her bland and contentless cosmopolitanism; and indeed no one does disagree with it, just as no one professes principled opposition to peace, justice, freedom, love, rationality, or compassion. The disagreements come when one gets down to cases. Of course there's no harm in restating (in good prose, that is; bad prose always does harm) even the most respectable and uncontroversial ideal. But it doesn't help much, either.

NUSSBAUM DOES get down to cases. She has gone around the country for several years looking at curricular developments, and by and large she likes what she's seen. Ideologues may rail at political correctness on campus, and pessimists may lament pervasive dumbing down, but these complaints "bear little resemblance to the daily reality of higher education in America." On the contrary, "higher education in America is in a healthy state. Never before have there been so many talented and committed young faculty so broadly dispersed in institutions of so many different kinds, thinking about different ways of connecting education with citizenship." They are doing this good work in courses on non-European societies and cultures, the history of women, the history of sexuality, and other nontraditional subjects. Much of the book describes these courses and programs, for the most part sympathetically. And they do sound . . . nice. But they also sound a touch banal. Here is the statement of purpose for a course Nussbaum cites as a "very successful example" of an "ambitious, . . . arduous, but potentially more satisfying approach" to multicultural education:

> [The] goal of the course is to develop within students a sense of informed, active citizenship as they enter an American society of increasing diversity by focusing on contemporary and historical issues of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and religious sectarianism in American life . . . to provide students with an intellectual awareness of the causes and effects of structured inequalities and prejudicial exclusion in American society . . . to provide students with increased self-awareness of what it means in our culture to be a person of their own gender, race, class, ethnicity, and religion as well as an understanding of how these categories affect those who are different from themselves . . . to expand students' ability to think critically, and with an open mind, about controversial contemporary issues that stem from the gender, race, class, ethnic, and religious differences that pervade American society.

Thanks, but I think I'd rather study Plato with Allan Bloom, or even join the Great Books discussion group at my local public library. Yes, it is vitally important to recognize and acknowledge that one's own values and traditions are not the only ones worthy of respect—that other human beings are indeed human beings, however different. But although the acknowledgment may sometimes be morally demanding, the recognition is not, intellectually speaking, very difficult or interesting. Once you've got it, you've got it. We're not talking poetry criticism or higher mathematics.

Besides, isn't there perhaps a filament of connection between the drive for diversity and the culture of consumption? Students are increasingly seen primarily as customers by universities today; isn't the emphasis on "difference" at least partly a marketing tool? To what extent are students attracted to nontraditional subjects by an appetite for novelty, or simply by mental laziness? In the hyperstimulated world of the American campus (by the way, *Cultivating Humanity* takes very little notice of the equally vast but less stimulating world of community and junior colleges), isn't depth rather than breadth the more pressing need?

Nussbaum, however, has chosen a different text for her sermon:

> To unmask prejudice and secure justice, we need argument, an essential tool of civic freedom.
>
> Education must promote the ability to doubt the unqualified goodness of one's own ways, as we search for what is good in human life

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the world over.

A central role of art is to challenge conventional wisdom and values.

If literature is a representation of human possibilities, the works of literature we choose will inevitably respond to, and further develop,our sense of who we are and might be.

However we order our varied loyalties, we should still be sure that we recognize the worth of human life wherever it occurs and see ourselves as bound by common human abilities and problems to people who lie at a great distance from us.

Amen. Yet as one endures these pious exhortations, one is reminded of Norman Mailer's exasperated comment on Paul Goodman in *The Armies of the Night*. "Mailer, of course, was not without respect for Goodman. He thought Goodman had had an enormous influence in the colleges and much of it had been, from his own point of view, very much to the good. . . . But, oh, the style! It set Mailer's teeth on edge to read it; he was inclined to think that the body of students who followed Goodman must have something deanimalized to put up with the style, or at least such was Mailer's bigoted view."

If NUSSBAUM is a slightly sententious Socrates, Hanson and Heath are savagely indignant Jeremiahs. "On the whole, higher education in America is in a healthy state," Nussbaum opines. Hanson and Heath take a different view. Their immediate grievance is the imminent demise of classics as a discipline. "The Greeks, unfamiliar to the general public, are now also dead in the university. Today Classics embraces a body of knowledge and a way of looking at the world that are virtually unrecognized, an almost extinct species even in its own protected habitat, the academic department. We Classicists are the dodo birds of academia."

True, the rate of publication in classics is at an all-time high: upwards of sixteen thousand articles, monographs, and books in one recent year, nearly thirty for each graduating senior in the field. This, however, is part of the problem. Most of this stuff, according to Hanson and Heath, is "silly, boring, mostly irrelevant," and above all, self-serving. "All of us who teach the Greeks anywhere, according to our station, confront daily a set of realities that say the opposite of what we learn from the Greeks: obscure and narrow publication, travel, title, pelf, and university affiliation are everything, undergraduate teaching, matching word with deed, living like Greeks relatively nothing."

"Living like Greeks"—what can that mean today? To the postmodernist left, it means the unthinkable: slavery, patriarchy, imperialism. To Nussbaum, it appears to mean an open-ended, society-wide philosophy seminar (led, presumably, by philosophy professors). To Hanson and Heath, it means something far less genteel and now scarcely comprehensible. For them, the Greeks' main legacy is not Socratic dialectic or cosmopolitan humanism—valuable though these things are—but rather a "hard and peculiar way of looking at the world": austere, rooted, stoical, individualistic, plainspoken, egalitarian, mistrustful of novelty, contemptuous of luxury and vanity, jealous of economic and political independence, regardful of physical courage and mother wit. The heroic ideal and the tragic sense are what they mean by "Homer" and what they consider just about dead.

Who's to blame? Hanson and Heath's indictment names names (including Nussbaum's) and cites documents (dozens of passages of wretched prose by academic feminists, postcolonialists, and deconstructionists). By the end there is as much blood on the floor as there was in Ithaca, in the Great Hall, after Odysseus killed the suitors. But of course the problems transcend classics. In every field, the star system means that senior faculty avoid teaching, junior faculty resent teaching, and both frantically publish more and more worth less and less. Financial troubles have turned university administrators into shills. French fads bemuse students; the therapeutic ethos coddles them; mass culture distracts them; and the global economy scares the bejesus out of them (hence all those business majors).

As Hanson and Heath acknowledge, all this has been said before (though rarely so well, in my opinion). What is perhaps most valuable in *Who Killed Homer?* is its continu-

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ation of the themes of Hanson's remarkable *The Other Greeks* (1995) and *Fields Without Dreams* (1996). The former is a radical reappraisal of Greek culture, which seeks to displace our interpretive focus from the polis to the countryside. "Greece alone," Hanson argues, "first created 'agrarianism,' an ideology in which the production of food and, above all, the actual people who own the land and do the farmwork, are held to be of supreme social importance. The recovery of this ancient ideology . . . explains both the beginning and the end of the Greeks' greatest achievement, the classical city-state."

Fields Without Dreams is even more original and radical: a *Works and Days* of California raisin farming (Hanson is, I have neglected to mention, a sixth-generation small farmer, and not primarily an academic), a bitter lament for American agriculture, and a fierce, despairing brief for agrarian populism. Hanson's portrait of the vanishing small farmer—"this bothersome, queer oddball"—is clear-eyed and unromantic; and his skepticism about the hollow abundance that has followed is free of condescension and nostalgia. As a diagnosis of contemporary cultural weightlessness, *Fields Without Dreams* ranks with the best of Christopher Lasch and Wendell Berry.

Hanson and Heath's Greeks are not Allan Bloom's aristocratic youths and esoteric sages nor Martha Nussbaum's proto-"world citizens"—nor, for that matter, Matthew Arnold's immortal poets and sculptors. They are *hoi mesoi*, a "society of small independent yeomen," a "republic of hoplite soldiers," each one claiming "an equal slot in the phalanx, a voice in the assembly, and a plot in the countryside." These "middling ones" created "the first freeholding citizenry in civilization" and then "crafted war and invented politics to preserve their discovery of agrarian egalitarianism." That all this sounds strikingly like late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century America—the high-water mark of democratic republicanism in modern history—is probably not a coincidence.

Is it necessary to choose between cosmopolitanism and agrarian populism? Let us hope not. The liberal virtues and the republican virtues are both indispensable. But that does not mean they are, at this moment, equally urgent or equally vulnerable. The apparently irresistible thrust of global capitalism threatens the latter virtues far more than the former, rootedness and psychological integrity far more than mobility and personal growth, perhaps even—to stretch a point—independence and self-reliance more than impartial benevolence. The "heroic ideal" and the "tragic sense": these phrases already sound archaic. But our civilization has not outgrown what they signify; it has merely forgotten. Cultural amnesia is not the same thing as progress. Or is it, as the critics of "progress" allege? ●

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Author photo: April Mullvain

FROM THE AUTHOR OF RADICAL SON

THE POLITICS OF BAD FAITH

THE RADICAL ASSAULT ON AMERICA'S FUTURE

BY DAVID HOROWITZ

"In the aftermath of the Nazi Holocaust, no progressive intellectual would ignore the link between the racist idea and the "final solution." But no progressive today will recognize the parallel nexus between the utopian idea and the gulags it produced."

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Self-Destructive Prophet

Peter Mandler

F.R. LEAVIS: A LIFE IN CRITICISM
by Ian MacKillop
St. Martin's Press, 1997 476 pp $35

WAS F.R. LEAVIS Britain's New York Intellectual? Though not Jewish himself, his wife and constant collaborator, Queenie Roth Leavis, was; and he was often taken for a Jew, described by one Cambridge undergraduate as dressing and speaking "like a member of the Knesset in its early days." Certainly he was an Old Testament kind of person, with his background in radical nonconformity and his angular, prophetic, puritanical self-presentation. Queenie once said that her husband "would have been one of Cromwell's generals" in the English Civil War; "No, my dear," he corrected her, "I would have been *Cromwell*." If not quite an immigrant, he was an upwardly mobile outsider, smashing his way into the literary establishment from an upbringing in the Cambridge lower middle class, only streets away physically but worlds away culturally from the university where he would spend most of his adult life. In the same oblique way, he was almost a Marxist. A critic of industrialism rather than capitalism, he resembled the guild socialists in regretting the loss of the organic agrarian community, the class separation, and the moral and cultural coarsening that he thought modern materialism had brought about. As a student of culture he strove, in *marxisant* fashion, to link art and literature to the social relations in which they were embedded—"anthropologico-literary" work he called it—and admired Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* for its nonreductive linkage of culture and "environment." He shared Trotsky's view that the great literature of the past should be revered as a conduit for the greatness of past civilizations and also that modern writers should be looked to for equivalent expressions of the greatness of the present. He had a following that was just as tightly knit, as paranoid, as addicted to its own jargon, as any Marxist sect, and people in Cambridge spoke of "Leavisites" as they would speak in New York of "Lovestoneites." There was a party line and a party journal (*Scrutiny*, which ran from 1932 to 1953), modeled on American precursors, and cadres were sent out from Cambridge to colonize other universities.

These superficial similarities are telling, but it is the differences that are crucial to understanding both the man and the environment within which he worked. For one thing, in the relationship between society and literature, it was always literature—the very pith and core of civilization—that had for Leavis the upper hand. The novelist and, especially, the poet were the most precious interpreters of the human experience and thus at least potentially the leaders of the species. (The sense of connection implied by leadership was important to Leavis—he had no patience for the lonely genius of the Romantics.) The prophetic status of the writer gave a literary critic like Leavis a priestly role as interpreter for the interpreter. It was the critic who could identify for a wider public the canon, the tradition, the representative of the age, who could explain what literature had to say and how it worked. The critical function was even more important in a postindustrial world where literature was becoming progressively divorced from daily life by specialization, materialism, and the coarsening effects of the mass media.

If this sounds all too reminiscent of Allan Bloom or William Bennett, it should be remembered that Leavis—like Trotsky—expected the moderns to carry on the good work of the classics. Shakespeare, Austen, George

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Eliot, and Henry James were the foundations of "the great tradition," but D.H. Lawrence was (in Leavis's youth) its living exponent. Leavis's early reputation, in the interwar years, was based on his championing of modernism (in the work of Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Isaac Rosenberg, and more obscure figures) as representing in form and content the spirit of the present age. This work, he felt, could be as alive and as useful to the British of the 1930s as Tolstoy and Dickens had been to the Victorians or Shakespeare to the Elizabethans. The greatest writers made experiments with language that were at the same time personal and "objective," accessible to others, expanding the resources of the language in a way that enriched the whole of society. Modern work with this potential for social usefulness had carefully to be separated from work that lacked it—such as the effete, self-indulgent poses of Bloomsbury (which also had its principal academic outpost in Cambridge).

These peculiarities of Leavis—and he was, above all else, a very *peculiar* man—left him in a no-man's-land between literature and politics that, it is hard to avoid the conclusion, diminished fatally his wider impact. As the Bloomsberries proved, literature was quite a good standpoint from which to launch an attack on "culture" as it had been narrowly defined by the Victorians—thus the lasting influence of Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Roger Fry, even in his way John Maynard Keynes—but it was not quite so good a standpoint from which to launch an attack on "society." We can see the limitations in considering Leavis's influence on Raymond Williams and on the unfolding of cultural studies. Leavis was the most magnetic figure within "Cambridge English" when Williams entered it in the late 1940s, and to some extent Leavis considered Williams as part of his camp. But almost immediately Williams differentiated himself from what he considered to be Leavis's elitism and his excessive "literariness."

In the 1950s Williams lectured on one of Leavis's pet topics—the "great tradition" in the English novel, from Dickens to Lawrence—yet what he valued in the great English novels was *not* their experiments in language nor their ability to create a community of transcendent interpreters of the English scene, but rather their insights into the lived experience of the English people. In his own masterpiece, *Culture and Society*, Williams tackled directly the emergence of cultural criticism—the inventors of a "culture" that expressed *for* the people the "best" of their own experiences, from Matthew Arnold to Leavis himself—but closed by criticizing the critics. It was a good thing, Williams said, to invent an idea of culture that was a blast *against* bourgeois society—obviously preferable to Bloomsbury's fastidious snobbery. But it was not enough. Both in order to express fully the whole of society's creative life, and in order to make a truly democratic critique of the anti-creative thrust of modern capitalism, it was necessary to define "culture" far more broadly so as to take in the experiences, the value-systems, and the representational practices of popular culture—even of "mass culture." This the Leavises would not brook. Queenie Leavis's major work, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, aimed to show how popular culture had been irretrievably polluted by modern materialism—there was nothing salvageable there.

THUS THE Leavises cut themselves off from that section of the rising generation—the socialist (and later the New Left) section—that should have been most responsive to their call. (Williams was not the only pioneer of cultural studies to fall within their grasp only to wriggle out of it—Stuart Hall also began his writing career as a Leavisite.) This divorce damaged the Leavises, but it damaged the New Left, too; the subsequent missteps of cultural studies—its credulity in finding elements of "resistance" in the crassest forms of commercial culture, its capitulation on the one hand to a crude Gramscian understanding of elite culture and on the other to depoliticized and decontextualized postmodern "readings" of popular culture—could have used a dose of the Leavises' skepticism and independence.

On his other flank, the academic "Establishment," Leavis was only slightly more influential. Here he fell prey not so much to the limitations of his ideology as to the sectarian-

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ism of his style. Despite his passionate belief that literary criticism should be a collective enterprise, he had terribly narrow ideas about what form that collective should take, which almost guaranteed his criticism would be isolated—not only from society, as the New Left complained, but from most other critics as well. Leavis believed that the writings of poets and novelists had to be worked on by an elite minority in surroundings effectively sheltered from mass culture.

The title of the Leavisite journal derived from Leavis's comment on the need "to do the criticism that is not done in the commercial press, and to focus a 'minority' scrutiny upon contemporary civilization." This concept might have—Leavis clearly thought it did—defined a special status for the university in society that, in a period of rapidly burgeoning higher education, could serve as an effective pulpit. But in practice Leavis seemed to think that the members of his minority could only be properly trained in the intimate group setting of an Oxbridge college—and, really, only in *his* college, Downing College, Cambridge. While his students went out into the world and tried to establish Leavisite outposts at Exeter and Swansea, in America and the Antipodes, Leavis to the end of his days undermined their efforts by seeking to keep the group tightly focused on his own person and his immediate Cambridge circle.

Especially after the demise of *Scrutiny*, Leavis preferred to issue his key pronouncements as privately printed or cyclostyled pamphlets for internal circulation, or as lectures to undergraduate clubs. He was generally hostile to the British Broadcasting Corporation and regarded even the highbrow weeklies, like the *Times Literary Supplement*, with suspicion. He immersed himself in one parochial Cambridge struggle after another (though some of these—such as his clashes with Bloomsbury and with C.P. Snow—had wider significance). Upon his retirement from Downing in 1962, he split angrily with his old college and even from his closest acolytes over the choice of his successor—shades again of the New York Intellectuals—and decamped grumpily to the new university at York. But he was never comfortable there and treated it more as a place of exile than as an alternative base, a model for a new generation. In these last years his public pronouncements narrowed tightly on a defense of his ideal of the university against the new models then proliferating—mass education, high-tech education, "functional" education—what Leavis sneeringly referred to as the "orthodoxies of enlightenment."

It is hard, therefore, to share the view of Francis Mulhern—author of the most systematic study of Leavis's thought and role, *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'*—that Leavis represented a turning point in the recomposition of the intellectual elite, one that both broadened its personnel beyond the upper classes (taking in "meritocrats" like Leavis himself) and broadened its social message by taking on board Leavis's limited critique of capitalism. Mulhern concludes that this Leavisite move insulated the "hegemonic" culture from the revolutionary shocks that might otherwise have brought it down in the 1960s and 1970s—precisely the kind of Gramscian thinking typical of cultural studies in its Marxist phase that Leavis would have found risible. Not only was Leavis untypical of any kind of intellectual elite at any time, he and his followers have always been marginal to the world of the British university, especially compared to the followers of Raymond Williams—who currently occupy top jobs in the English faculties of all the leading British universities, without any obviously revolutionary consequences.

Ian MacKillop's biography—the first full biographical treatment of Leavis—does not attempt literary or political analysis on the scale of Mulhern's book, which MacKillop politely recommends. But the biographical view illuminates more clearly Leavis's *failure* to transform literary studies than does Mulhern's ambitious overestimate. In some ways MacKillop (who studied with Leavis at Downing) is a paid-up member of the cult, and he performs some splendid acrobatics to excuse Leavis's faults. Leavis's celebrated inconsistency on the subject of Dickens's greatness is fudged with righteous indignation. The charge that Leavis only cared about a novel's moral qualities is rebutted with Leavis's conception of the "novel as dramatic poem," but

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this conception is never brought to life (nor, I think, does Leavis ever fully explain it in his work, whereas stern lectures on literary characters' moral qualities, or lack of same, abound). MacKillop characterizes Leavis's famous touchiness as "not absurd." He tiptoes around the bizarre way in which Leavis both exploited and protected (and feared?) Queenie. Criticisms of Leavis are broken up into component parts and analyzed down to the minutest particulars in a very Leavisian way, chopping down the trees one by one until the forest is magicked away. My favorite MacKillopism is his defense of Leavis against the charge of paranoia on the ground that such accusations are meaningless because deconstructive psychiatrists no longer believe in "external reality" (an argument supplied to him by a Leavisite psychologist).

In the end, however, MacKillop's partiality causes him to excuse, but never to obscure, Leavis's grotesqueries. The critiques, both from sworn enemies and estranged students, are meticulously cited in full and readers are at liberty to ignore the exculpation and reach their own conclusions. At one point he even grants that there was a "suicidal strand in Leavisian ideology," but then scurries away from the admission in embarrassment. The wider contexts of debates and disputes are richly recounted, sometimes in amusingly Leavisian style and detail, but never tediously. The weird world of Leavis and his Cambridge contemporaries is displayed as compellingly and colorfully here as anywhere I can think of, with plenty of explanatory asides for outsiders that will help them wend their way into the center of the maze. Only a biography, it may be, can convey properly just why the Leavises were so magnetic and why, too, they were so decisively self-defeating. ●

PETER MANDLER teaches modern history at London Guildhall University. His latest book is *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (Yale University Press, 1997).

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Nice Guys Finish Last

Robert V. Daniels

FROM THE OTHER SHORE: RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AFTER 1921
by André Liebich
Harvard University Press, 1997 464 pp $48

THERE IS A certain romantic attraction in the history of lost causes. The losers are usually nicer guys; in the case of the Russian Mensheviks, they were the humanitarian shadow of communist inhumanity. But the Mensheviks' fate was not a tragic one just because they lost. Their real tragedy in exile was that their unique potential for understanding the evolution of communism was vitiated by their philosophical dogmatism and their petty internal disputes.

In its basics the story of the Mensheviks is well known to anyone familiar with the history of socialism: Russian Marxists of the democratic persuasion who, long before the revolution, broke with Lenin and the Bolsheviks over the future winners' authoritarian methods; who tried vainly to sustain the democratic experiment of the provisional government in 1917; who were suppressed and exiled by the victorious communist regime. What Liebich adds to the tale is the intricate history of the Mensheviks and their thinking in the years of adversity after 1917, as oppositionists during the early years of the Soviet regime, and as critics of the Soviet system from afar throughout the subsequent decades, until they literally died out after midcentury.

André Liebich is a polyglot scholar of Polish background and Canadian citizenship who teaches at the Institute of International Studies in Geneva. After years of research and a series of learned articles on the Mensheviks, he has now produced the definitive work on their postrevolutionary history, with two basic objectives in mind—to overcome history's "deeply ingrained disregard for exile movements," and to comprehend "the fate of Marxism." His title comes from the famous nineteenth-century Russian exile Alexander Herzen, and the whole book is in a sense a reflection on Herzen's philosophy of the exile's lonely mission in Russian history.

The origins of the Mensheviks in the prerevolutionary cleavage among the Russian social democrats, according to Liebich, have been oversimplified by the retrospective contrast of democratic Mensheviks and totalitarian Bolsheviks. As Marxists in a single worker-oriented party, the two wings separated much less sharply and abruptly than is usually thought. Liebich speaks of a "Menshevik-Bolshevik continuum," along which, before the revolution, it was common for individuals to shift both ways.

After the fall of Czar Nicholas II in the February Revolution, the Mensheviks took a leading role in the soviets (councils) representing the urban workers and the army, and backed the new provisional government while Lenin and the Bolsheviks were conspiring against it. Dominant in the party at this point were the Georgian Mensheviks (largely outside Liebich's account), who had flourished surprisingly in the semiconstitutional politics of 1905–1917, and later ran Georgia as an independent republic from 1918 to 1921, before they were sent into their own exile when the fledgling state was forcibly sovietized. Nikolai Chkheidze served as chair of the Petrograd Soviet until Trotsky took it over in the fall of 1917, and Irakli Tsereteli was the toughest defender of democracy within the provisional cabinet. Nevertheless, the Mensheviks lost their hold on the soviets to the Bolsheviks, who turned to the Second Congress of Soviets to legitimize their seizure of power in the Octo-

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ber Revolution. Outraged by the Bolshevik coup and the assault on the Winter Palace, the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary minority walked out of the congress. That was the point of no return, the beginning of Bolshevik-Communist one-party rule, even though other parties were allowed to field candidates in the election of the Constituent Assembly a few weeks later. The Mensheviks ran a distant third, behind the peasant-backed Socialist Revolutionaries and the second-place Bolsheviks, but Lenin made all such democratic distinctions moot when he disbanded the newly elected Constituent Assembly in January 1918.

Despite these fateful events, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks for some time retained a soft spot for each other because of their common doctrinal origins and prerevolutionary associations. The Mensheviks steadfastly refused to join the anticommunist cause in the Russian Civil War, and the Communists treated the Mensheviks much less harshly than they did other opponents of the new regime. Though constantly harassed, the Mensheviks remained nominally a legal opposition party until 1921. Between 1920 and 1923 Lenin allowed the leading Mensheviks to leave the country, in contrast to the more recalcitrant Socialist Revolutionaries, who were hunted down as Civil War enemies and tried as traitors in 1922. Other Mensheviks, again outside Liebich's focus, remained in Russia and worked as economic experts; V.M. Bazarov and V.G. Groman, in particular, played a key role in the development of Soviet economic planning. That was before Stalin transformed the planning process in 1929 into a regime of military commands and allocations, and put the Menshevik functionaries on trial for "sabotage" in 1931. This trial of the Soviet Mensheviks served as a test run for Stalin's show trials of the later 1930s, with all their fabricated charges and forced confessions.

Liebich is at his most fascinating in his vignettes of the individual Menshevik leaders in exile. They were a close-knit group, despite their personal and ideological bickering, needing each other like the spouses in a bad marriage. Almost all were assimilated Jewish intellectuals, lacking any mundane skills except writing, and they imposed on themselves, says Liebich, a new "politics of isolation." They refused to recruit new members who had not belonged to the movement before the revolution, and for years they barred their members from writing for nonsocialist publications. Their material circumstances were penurious at best, while personal and ideological clashes persisted among them in a tiresome tale of sectarian disputation.

Yulii Martov, the idealistic adversary of Lenin in 1903, and his brother-in-law Fyodor Dan, chair of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets prior to the Bolshevik takeover, set the "Martov-Dan line": criticize the Communists, but give no aid and comfort to their enemies, who would assuredly be worse. Lidia Dan, Martov's sister, was the peacemaker among the Mensheviks. Rafael Abramovich, a leader of the Jewish Social Democratic Bund before the revolution, stood close to Martov as a Menshevik-Internationalist until their exile, and in Berlin in 1921 the two co-founded the *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* (*Socialist Herald*) as the official organ of the "Foreign Delegation" of the Russian Social Democratic Party. A successful writer and journalist, Abramovich then emerged as the leader of the Mensheviks' anti-Soviet right wing, in which he was supported by Boris Nicolaevsky, the only non-Jew in the exile leadership, an assiduous archivist and the best scholar of the group. David Dallin was the youngest and most independent of the leading Mensheviks, and the most anti-Soviet. In all, forty individuals appear in Liebich's capsule biographical guide.

In exile the Mensheviks were still buffeted by events. Ensconced in Berlin with the benign patronage of the German Social Democrats, they had to flee Hitler twice, first in 1933 when they moved to Paris, and then in 1940 when they took ship to New York with U.S. visas arranged by friends in the labor movement. Most of them never adjusted to the culture shock of life in the United States.

THE ENDURING significance of the Mensheviks is their role as critics of the Soviet regime from a Marxist standpoint. They were the best prepared and best

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informed of any observers of the evolution of the Soviet system, until the rise of Western Sovietology after World War II. More than any other school of thought, the Mensheviks grasped the contradiction between the behavior of the Communist leadership and their Marxist and socialist claims; hence the key importance of the exiles for Liebich's quest to understand the fate of Marxism. But the Mensheviks' insights seem less influential than Liebich suggests: By and large, the outside world could not grasp the distinction between Marxist theory and Soviet practice, and either exculpated Stalinism because it claimed to be socialist, or condemned socialism because it was identified with Stalinism.

Further, the Mensheviks' efforts to comprehend communism were hamstrung by their own dogmatic Marxism: from the class standpoint, Stalinism had to be either basically bourgeois or basically proletarian. This was one theoretical root of the ongoing schism between right and left Mensheviks, those who condemned the communist system and those who felt they had to make excuses for it. Like the Trotskyists, the Mensheviks were late in coming to the realization that Stalinism, as a supraclass dictatorship ruling through the "New Class" bureaucracy, confounded the fundamental class premises of Marxist theory.

Because of their common Marxist doctrine, both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks overestimated the Russian working class, in the one instance as a basis for rule, in the other as a basis for opposition. Realistically speaking, Marxism was an inappropriate theory of socialism for Russia; Russian populism, the ideology of the Socialist Revolutionaries, with its stress on the country's predominant peasantry as a natural base for socialism, would have worked much better, both as a guide to action and as a rationale for policy. It avoided the Marxist hang-up over the bourgeois revolution and capitalism as prerequisites for socialism. Why, after all, can there not be a socialist path of noncapitalist but democratic development, which is what really would have applied to Russia? In the event, except for their ill-fated left wing who thought they could cooperate with the Communists, the Socialist Revolutionaries had no more will than the Mensheviks to exploit their brief opportunity for revolutionary leadership in 1917.

Liebich is inclined to discount parallels between the Mensheviks and the communist opponents of Lenin and Stalin between 1917 and 1929. In fact, as I showed years ago in *The Conscience of the Revolution*, the opposition factions within the Communist Party leaned repeatedly in the anti-centralist and democratizing direction that had distinguished the Mensheviks all along. Liebich overlooks the influence of the former left Mensheviks, including Trotsky, whose revolutionary zeal in 1917 led them to swallow their previous reservations about Lenin and join the Bolshevik ranks; they went on to play a leading role in the Left Opposition from the early 1920s until Stalin suppressed them in 1927. Thus, there was indeed some substance to Stalinist charges that the left was a "Menshevik deviation," if we apply Liebich's notion of a continuum to extend from the democratic Mensheviks to the totalitarian Stalinists. Naturally Trotsky and his sympathizers insisted on their party loyalty and denied Stalin's allegations, but the charge of Menshevism was really to their credit.

Liebich does point out how the Communist right wing, headed by the ideologist Nikolai Bukharin and by Lenin's successor as prime minister, Alexei Rykov, maintained contact with the Mensheviks throughout the 1920s. Bukharin's last political act before his arrest and execution was a trip to Paris in 1936, when he unburdened himself to Nicolaevsky about the menace of Stalin. This was the source of the remarkable "Letter of an Old Bolshevik," published by Nicolaevsky in the *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* and translated into English two years later.

In their final, New York phase, the aging Mensheviks were more isolated than ever. They never established much influence in the debates among American radicals. The events of World War II and the incipient cold war exacerbated their old schisms; Dan and a few followers moved further to the left and the dominant right wing became ever more aggressively anti-Soviet. Dan died isolated in 1946 after completing his magnum opus, *The Origins of Bolshevism* (English translation, Lon-

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don, Secker & Warburg, 1964), while Nicolaevsky isolated himself on the right by his vain efforts to organize new Russian emigrés despite their antipathy to anything called socialist.

One bright spot in the Mensheviks' glum New York world was the *New Leader*—"unquestionably the Mensheviks' American 'flagship,'" according to Liebich. Abramovich and Nicolaevsky were regular contributors, among a host of other Menshevik bylines, and Dallin served as associate editor under Sol Levitas in the late 1940s and early 1950s. All expanded on the theme of Soviet totalitarianism, to the point, according to one critic quoted by Liebich, of becoming "more anti-Communist than socialist." Despite all this, as Liebich learned through the Freedom of Information Act, the Mensheviks were subjected to surveillance by the FBI, which lacked any sophistication about Russian politics and seemed to regard anyone with a socialist label as some kind of Soviet agent.

Although Dallin published copiously and Nicolaevsky founded the art of Kremlinology, the Mensheviks and their insights were not exploited by American sovietology as fully as they might have been. There was a bad falling-out in the 1950s between Abramovich and the Columbia University Research Program on the History of the CPSU, leaving the Menshevik leader to publish his own book independently: *The Soviet Revolution, 1917–1939* (International Universities Press, 1962), an excellent account of the Communist leaders and their betrayal of genuine socialism. Abramovich's work contrasted both with the naive ideological interpretation and with the worms-eye sociological studies that dominated much Sovietology at the time and later.

Liebich concludes on the pathetic note of Mensheviks wrangling over their own historical record, set against the oblivion the movement has suffered in the world at large, including postcommunist Russia. An important corrective, for history's ultimate judgment, has been the Menshevik documentation project at Columbia University directed by Professor Leopold Haimson. Beyond all this, as Liebich stresses, "The Mensheviks' legacy is . . . independent of the course of political development in Russia." As a principled, if relatively feeble, voice of democratic socialism, the Menshevik philosophy supports the quest for a third way between the ossified bureaucratism of the Soviet system and the free-market quagmire that has succeeded it. ●

Robert V. Daniels is professor emeritus of history at the University of Vermont, and author, most recently, of *Russia's Transformation: Snapshots of a Crumbling System* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

INDEX AVAILABLE

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Misunderstanding Ideology

Editors:

In "The Ends of Ideology" review [of Norberto Bobbio's *Left and Right*] (*Dissent*, Summer 1998), Jeffrey Scheuer creates an olla podrida jumbling together Francis Fukuyama, myself, the "proud (but naive) American tradition of pragmatism [Richard Rorty?]," "neutral solutions," "no immutable values at stake," and so on. I will leave a first-year graduate student to sort out all the confusions. But as to myself, no, no, no.

In the Harvard University Press re-issue of my *End of Ideology*, in 1998, I wrote that many books are known for their title, not for their content; regrettably, mine is often one of them. And Scheuer shows this again. The argument that I put forth was that in the past three hundred years, a great "historic crossover" had occurred in the nature of revolutionary movements. In the English civil war, for example, the struggle of Cromwell and the Puritans (and the Fifth Monarchy Men, to which Cromwell had once belonged), was carried out in religious terms, though the political interests were evident underneath. Beginning with the French Revolution and carried through in the Russian Revolution, the conflicts were carried out in ideological terms, though the religious passions were evident underneath. This is why I had called Marxism a "secular religion." The "end of ideology" argument was that this great historic crossover was now finished.

But since I also said that ideology, in my formulation, was a mobilization to commit people to action and to justify these in normative terms, I stated, in 1960, that new social movements would create their own ideologies, such as those of "Pan-Arabism, color and nationalism," and that in the distinctive differences between the older and newer ideologies "lie the great political problems of the second half of the twentieth century."

Quite a difference from what Mr. Scheuer has written.

DANIEL BELL
Cambridge, Mass.

Jeffrey Scheuer Replies:

I don't know what an "olla podrida" is or how many of them I have unwittingly created, but I appreciate the point of Daniel Bell's letter and sincerely apologize for having shortchanged his complex and interesting conception of ideology. At best it was lazy of me not to distinguish his use of the term from others'.

I would add that I think his objection buttresses a larger point in the review: that the term has always been used in divergent and even radically different ways. I'm still not clear as to which sense of "ideology" has ended; if Professor Bell means the end of politics as a vehicle of religious revolution, the Taliban might challenge that view; but perhaps I still don't do him justice.

I'm afraid there are more confusions here than most first-year graduate students could sort out; certainly there is more than one useful conception of ideology. I hope at least to have conveyed my support for Bobbio's clear and widely accepted (but not exclusive) sense of "ideology" as the rubric of normative, left-right political debate in democratic societies; and my further agreement with Bobbio that, in *this* sense, ideology has no foreseeable end.

JEFFREY SCHEUER
New York, N.Y.

Affirmative Action

Editors:

Joanne Barkan writes of her second thoughts on affirmative action as well as those of Nathan Glazer and Glenn Loury ("Affirmative Action: Second Thoughts," *Dissent*, Summer 1998). The catalyst for all three is the passage of Proposition 209 in California last year. The shocking decline in minority admissions at Berkeley and UCLA after 209 went into effect was unsettling. But, I have news for all three; the result of 209 has not been as drastic as the *New York Times* claims. The University of California embraces eight campuses, all of which are rated among the top seventy-five research universities in America. The change in minority admissions for the eight is -2.3 percent, a figure that is statistically insignificant.

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Also, the graduation rate at the smaller UC campuses is higher than at Berkeley and UCLA. Minority students turned down by the two elite campuses have gone to the not undistinguished San Diego, Irvine, Santa Cruz, or Riverside campuses. The university administration has not rushed these figures into print and I noticed them on internal university memos.

Given these figures, one of the results of 209 is that minorities in the entering class of 1998 can all take pride in their admission, which was achieved in competition with Asian and Anglo students. This is something that was not true of the 1997 or earlier classes. Ironically, more minority students may graduate in four years because of the changed distribution of students. The minorities have always done better on the smaller campuses.

Nobody has asked why two California State University professors ever proposed 209. The reason they gave some years ago was that the California legislature was discussing a bill requiring state universities to graduate minority students in accordance with their proportion in the California population. What would the thoughts of our three agonizing intellectuals be to such a proposal?

KENNETH BARKIN
Riverside, Calif.

Joanne Barkan Replies:

Kenneth Barkin squeezes many a misconception into his brief letter. He begins: "Joanne Barkan writes of her second thoughts on affirmative action. . ." The expression "second thoughts" refers to a reconsideration or revised opinion. I wrote about Nathan Glazer's and Glenn Loury's second thoughts. My position on affirmative action—that it's a weak, flawed tool but one I hesitate to give up until we have something better—hasn't changed. I argued the same position in the Fall 1995 issue of *Dissent*.

Second, K. Barkin calls the decline in minority admissions at Berkeley and UCLA "shocking." As I note in my article, for years social scientists and university administrators have been predicting a "white-out" with the end of affirmative action. I find K. Barkin's shock (he's a member of the history department at UC Riverside) as unwarranted as Glazer's.

Third, K. Barkin says he has "news" for me, Glazer, and Loury: "the result of [Proposition] 209 has not been as drastic as the *New York Times* claimed" because overall minority admissions for the eight campuses of the University of California declined only slightly. That's news? I read it in the *New York Times* on April 1, 1998, the day after the university announced its admissions figures. The *Times* published the complete racial breakdown of students admitted to all eight campuses in its lengthy article. It's a safe bet that his news comes as no news to Glazer or Loury either.

Fourth (and most important), K. Barkin seems to have missed the substance of all our positions on affirmative action. Glazer is worried about the absence of blacks at the most elite universities ("the Harvards, the Berkeleys, and the Amhersts"); the fact that blacks rejected by Berkeley can attend San Diego and Irvine does not speak to his concerns at all. Loury, too, wants blacks at Berkeley and UCLA, but he wants them to get there without admission preferences. Like Loury, I argue for reordering society's priorities and redistributing resources so that blacks will have substantial equality of opportunity and can compete on merit. Unlike Loury, I'll accept preferences until we get something better.

Finally, K. Barkin asks what the "three agonizing intellectuals" would think about a proposal to require California's state universities "to graduate minority students in accordance with their proportion in the California population." Good grief! My article describes at length how Nathan Glazer has crusaded for decades on behalf of the color-blind principle and now deviates only for blacks applying to universities. I recount how Glenn Loury has spent a good part of his life as a public intellectual campaigning against lower standards for minorities. I enumerate my own objections to creating diversity artificially by means of preferential treatment. Kenneth Barkin's letter hasn't provided information or insight, but it has given me something else to agonize about: the level of reading that's going on at the universities.

How to Save Social Security

Editors:

In "The HMO Revolution" (*Dissent*, Spring 1998), Rashi Fein describes the worsening health care situation in this country, determined as it is largely by for-profit organizations.

The cause of the misery is the failure of the Clinton administration to grasp the unique opportunity of 199, when, with control of both houses of Congress, it failed to concentrate its efforts on passing a universal health plan. Instead, its real effort went to pushing NAFTA through. The results will haunt us for a long time.

While the HMO situation remains gloomy, there is hope for improvement in the related question of Social Security, related via Medicare, even in the present political environment. That possibility is connected with the taxation of Social Security benefits.

Social Security benefits ultimately derive from the

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regressive Social Security tax; because the system is indispensable, we put up with its regressive character. But when benefits are taxed, depending on income level, the proceeds are diverted to the government's general fund—a clear substitution of a regressive tax for the more-or-less progressive income tax.

The solution is as clear as it is fair: return taxes derived from Social Security benefits to the Social Security fund. Besides correcting an outrageous situation, the change would secure Social Security's future, even undermining much of the corrosive cynicism connected with that future.

JOSEPH M. DIAMOND
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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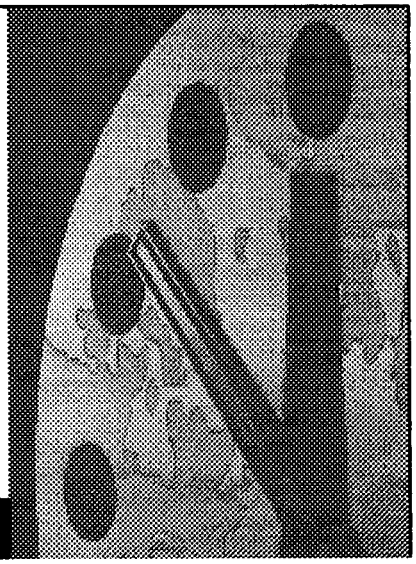

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MY BEACH BOOK this past summer was Don DeLillo's 1997 novel *Underworld*. Near Asbury Park, on a beach that was eroding by the hour, where the emergency jetty was blown away and the surf rushed at us like a gang shoving outsiders off its turf, it felt just right. My wife says she's never seen me cling to a new book so intensely.

I've always wanted to love DeLillo: he's so damned smart, and he comes from the Bronx. He is amazingly fluent in modern language-games—academic, corporate, political, military, cybernetic—and he has an acute sense of what's wrong with modern life. But *Oy*, such a cold heart! His languages have no speakers; his world feels emotionally hollow, like it's been evacuated by human beings. And those paranoid narratives, full of secret agents and conspiracies and things that blow up in the night—those metaphysical Boys' Books—grow up already! But he's still a thrill to read.

Underworld starts with a sixty-page set piece featuring the Giants' and Dodgers' 1951 playoff, Jackie Gleason and Frank Sinatra, "Jedgar" Hoover and the Soviet Bomb. It's a great performance, vintage DeLillo. But then, all of a sudden, he throws us into a completely different kind of book, one that turns out to be a lot more compelling. It is a children-neighborhood-family story, told with more passion and emotional urgency than anything he has ever done. It's about feeling and reverie and introspection and the bonds of love—you could call it a metaphysical Girls' Book. Who would have thought DeLillo could write that?

DeLillo's people are the Shay family. They come from a tenement in the center of the Bronx, in the Italian neighborhood west of the Zoo. (It's still there.) They are Jimmy, a small-time bookie, who goes out for cigarettes one night and is never seen again; his wife, Rosemary, who holds the family together through years of hard times; and their sons, Nick and Matt—tough, bright, rivalrous, soulful kids. We never meet Jimmy, but by his absence he dominates every minute of their lives. Was he killed, did he kill himself, or did he simply walk out on them? No one in this family can ever come out of mourning for "the long ghosts [who] are walking the hall . . . back in those railroad rooms at the narrow end of the night."

DeLillo finds new strength and depth as a writer by getting personal. Here Nick daydreams old summer nights:

> All movement toward the air, heads sticking out windows, women eating peaches in darkened windows, laughing in the dark up there . . . men in undershirts down on the stoops with radios going. . . . Older kids on rented bikes, ten cents an hour, and girls riding with some of the boys, sitting sideways on the crossbar, and the boys riding into the gushing water, making everybody happy. . . .

Personal, but also communal. Telling the story of an immigrant working-class family, its life and death and its life-in-death, he joins the great tradition of American Realism. It's a surprise to find him playing in this ballpark. But he can play!

DeLillo's Matty and Nick evoke *Death of a Salesman*'s Happy and Biff. But they come up in a more expansive phase of Pentagon capitalism, the "Sputnik Age," an age that scouted smart city boys and made room for them. The boys could succeed—get an education, achieve upward mobility, have steady jobs and houses and cars, support their mother in style—and yet, DeLillo wants us to know, their lives could still be a tragic human waste to which "Attention must be paid." The working-class family can collapse from failure, but also from success.

The working-class immigrant family story is America's longest-playing tragedy. Think Anzia Yesierska and Henry Roth, think James Farrell and Clifford Odets, think Bruce Springsteen and Maxine Hong Kingston. Ironically, living through this tragedy is one of the things that makes America a community. *Underworld* helps expand the house we live in. It's a perfect beach book for a crumbling shore.

MARSHALL BERMAN

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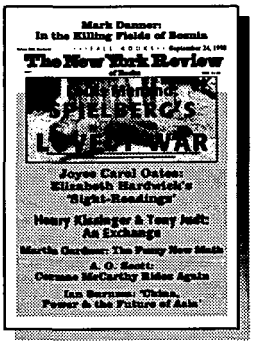

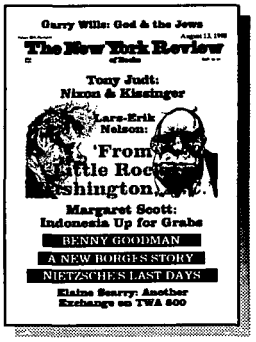

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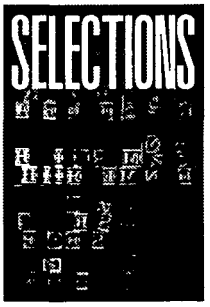

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